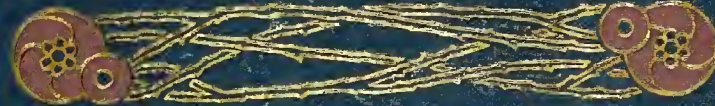
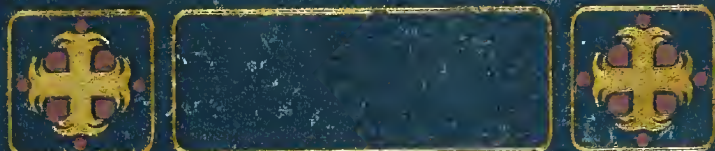


NORTH DEVON

♦♦ F. J. SNELL ♦♦



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NORTH DEVON



A.B. Winbach

Clovelly
The Harbour

NORTH DEVON

BY

F. J. SNELL

AUTHOR OF

"THE BLACKMORE COUNTRY," "EARLY ASSOCIATIONS OF ARCHBISHOP TEMPLE,"
"A BOOK OF EXMOOR," ETC.

WITH

26 FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS

IN COLOUR



LONDON

ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

1906

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NORTH DEVON

CHAPTER I

THE ENGLISH SWITZERLAND

ALTHOUGH, at first sight, such a statement appears to be restrictive and inconsistent with the title of the work, the fact remains that the tract of country celebrated in the present volume practically corresponds with the official limits of the Port of Barnstaple. During the reign of the late Queen the Lords Commissioners of Her Majesty's Treasury appointed that—that “geographical expression” to continue and be a port which was to commence at a small stream of water running into the Bristol Channel at a place called Glenthorne, and dividing the counties of Devon and Somerset,

near the Foreland—the westernmost limit of the Port of Bridgwater. It was to continue along the coast of Devon to Morte Point, across Barnstaple and Bideford Bay to Hartland Point, and thence to Dazard Point, in the parish of St Genny's, Cornwall—the northern limit of the Port of Padstow. And it was to include the River Taw, all other rivers, bays, harbours, creeks, and pills within the limits before mentioned, and Lundy Island.

We do not propose to observe those limits with anything approaching scrupulosity, nor do we, following the evil precedent of the Lords Commissioners (who seem to have acted on the maxim that "Nature abhors a vacuum"), intend to violate the territorial integrity of Cornwall by describing any portion of the "delectable duchy" in a book devoted to North Devon. Obviously, however, the circumstance of this long line of coast being assigned to Barnstaple's jurisdiction emphasises the importance of that town

as the metropolis of the district, and hereafter it will be our duty to show that the literary or romantic ascendancy of Bideford, acquired in some measure at the expense of her suzerain, is more or less of an illusion and out of accord with their historical relations.

The whole of North Devon draws to Barnstaple as its commercial centre, and even Exmoor, though mainly in Somerset, feels its magnetic influence; for where is there a better mart for its staple produce—sheep? But, as is the case in the solar system, there is discoverable between moor and town a centrifugal as well as centripetal force. It was so in the days of Amyas Leigh. Four centuries—nay, half a century ago, Exmoor mutton was esteemed such a delicacy as was worth some trouble to come by. Did not Kingsley write:

“Here’s a saddle o’ mutton! I rode twenty miles for mun yesterday, I did, over beyond Barnstaple; and five years old, Mr John, it is, if ever five years was;

and not a tooth to mun's head, for I looked to that; and smelt all the way like any apple; and if it don't ate as soft as ever was scald cream, never you call me Thomas Burman."

Mr Burman's excitable manner of speech leaves it an open question whether he covered twenty miles in all or twenty miles beyond Barnstaple. On the latter assumption it is as likely as not that he rode for the savoury meat to Lynton, which is twenty miles—we were going to say from everywhere, but, at anyrate, from each of its principal neighbours—Barnstaple, Ilfracombe, South Molton, and Minehead.

Lynton, though the first town, is not the first parish in Devon, nor yet the extreme point, east, of the Port of Barnstaple. This, as we have seen, is Countisbury. Whilst, however, Lynton and Countisbury are separate parishes, it may be doubted whether the untutored traveller will rightly divide them. An attempt to enlighten him will probably



Barnstable
from the River

result in a renewal of the surprises that commonly wait upon those who are plunged into the occult science of our parochial boundaries. Lynton and Lynmouth are geographically so closely linked that the reasonable soul may be excused for thinking that they form a single ecclesiastical cure; but such is not the case—a great part of Lynmouth is in the parish of Countisbury.

This discovery prompts the further inquiry, why, if Lynmouth is Countisbury, Lynton also is not Countisbury, or Countisbury Lynton—the distance between them is only a couple of miles. Our esteemed ancestors pondered this question, and the result is noted in a directory of the year 1850, where it stands recorded: “The perpetual curacy [of Countisbury] is consolidated with that of Lynton, and is in the same patronage, appropriation, and incumbency.”

Passing to the next generation, it appears that in 1883 the perpetual curacy had been improved into a vicarage of the

gross value of £52 per annum, and was held in conjunction with the rectory of Brendon, where the parson resided. "Meagre" rather than "gross" would be the fitter epithet for this nominal stipend, the recipient of which would hardly, in that fashionable neighbourhood, have been rich on these fruits of preaching, if they had all been gathered in, which we infer they were not. The clergyman's net income is now "quoted" at thrice that amount; and as no mention occurs whether of Lynton or Brendon, it is plain that large and beneficent changes have supervened. A glance at "Crockford," however, will make manifest that Lynmouth is still Countisbury, so that the logic of the situation continues to strive for expression.

Another instance of vacillation is to be found in the spelling and pronunciation of these names. At one time the form "Linton" was usual, though, curiously enough, "Lynmouth" was always spelt with a "y." The "n," however, was not

sounded in the latter name, and an old friend of mine, who is over eighty and has lifelong links with the district, adheres to the elision. In former days the rule was "Countesbury(or Countisbury)": now the name is invariably written Countisbury, without the option of an "e." The topic is worthy of a digression.

It may be conjectured that our ancestors allowed themselves to be misled by a false scent, or by a fond effort at conformity, beguiling themselves with the notion that the parish had been glorified with a nimbus—that is, with the coronet of an earl's lady. Really and truly the assumption has no stauncher support than the residence of Lord Lovelace at Ashley Lodge, which is over the border, and the analogy of Countess Wear (or Weir), near Exeter, whose name and tale may have assisted the delusion.

The present spelling is due, perhaps, to another ingenious guess—that Countisbury means the boundary of the county. Even Mr Z. E. A. Wade, that reveller in

Keltic, though conservative of the “e,” hypothetically admits the possibility of the derivation (*Pixy-led in North Devon*, p. 80); whilst the great enchanter of Exmoor has pointed out that “Cosgate is supposed to be County’s Gate” (*The Blackmore Country*, Prologue, x).

This is to follow wandering fires. The sentence of Mr R. N. Worth, who, alas! is no longer with us, but, free of the flesh, is yet a pope in such controversies—his sentence is that Countisbury is “clearly” the “bury or camp of the headland, *Cant-ys-bury*, akin to Kinterbury, near Plymouth, and the Canterbury in Kent.” Great solace and refreshment it is to attain finality in this weighty matter; and now, if you please, we will turn our attention to something else. Referring to the golden days of King Arthur, Chaucer sings:

“All was this lond fulfilled of faëry”;

and so, in truth, it is now, only for elves of all sorts are substituted memories. It

is safe to postulate that in all England not a nook or corner is void of interesting associations if we can but find them. At the outset we had occasion to speak of Glenthorne and the little stream thereby. The mansion is far too modern to boast a banshee, but on a stormy night the occupants might call the spirits of dead smugglers from the "vasty deep," with the assurance that, if they did not come, the disobedience would be perverse, for this was a favourite haunt of fair traders long before the descendants of Nelson's secretary (Mr, afterwards Sir William, Cosway) took possession of the spot and christened it Glenthorne.

A former owner once made several ponds on the summit of the cliff, which rises to a height of 1200 feet above the sea, by damming the head of the little torrent which dances down the woods in a series of cascades. The ponds were stocked with carp. There is, however, no poacher like your otter, and one of these carnivora, coming up from the Bristol

Channel, killed all the fish in a single night. The polar antithesis of that enterprising otter is a hunted heavy stag, which, to avoid being taken, accomplished a desperate leap from Countisbury Foreland. This is so exceptional an incident in the annals of hunting that the circumstances are worth noting.

It was Tuesday, August 15, 1899. The meet was at Exford, but there being no find, a move was made across the North Forest, and at Tom's Hill some stags were started. After a lame deer had been singled out and killed at Black Pits, another stag was followed to Watersmeet. Here it was turned back by some people at Chizzlecombe, and going on to Countisbury village, ran to the Foreland, where it went over the cliffs, on to the rocks below. It was injured, but not killed, and struggled out to sea. A boat was sent in pursuit, but in vain—not a trace of the animal could be found. It was lucky that only a few tufters were following, and these were called off. Had

the pack been in cry, many of the hounds would unquestionably have gone the same way as their quarry. About forty horsemen witnessed this extraordinary finish. The majority of the field, which numbered two hundred and fifty, were waiting for the pack to be laid on, and thus were not present at one of the most sensational episodes in the history of the chase.

The present master of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds is Mr R. A. Sanders, who was born in 1867, and educated at Harrow, which has been aptly described as "a nursery of sportsmen and athletes." He rose to be head of the school, and then proceeded to Balliol College, Oxford, where he took a first in law. He afterwards entered at the Inner Temple, and might well have anticipated a distinguished career at the Bar ; but it dawned upon him in good time that it was expedient not to waste in the law courts what was meant for the chase, and in the autumn of 1890 stayed for the season at that well-

known hostelry, the Staghunter's Inn, Brendon, hunting with the Devon and Somerset. Mr Sanders was delighted with this splendid sport, and with the charms of the west country; and apart from occasional excursions to Leicestershire and other less notable hunting centres, he has since permanently resided on the western moors. His fidelity to the land of his adoption has no doubt been strengthened by his marriage with Miss Lucy Halliday of Glenthorne, in 1893, when the ceremony took place in the little sanctuary at Oare.

It is not our intention to dilate on the perils and pleasures of stag-hunting—a fascinating topic, but one to which ample justice has been done in previous volumes and periodicals. It is desirable, however, to observe, for the benefit of those who have no interest in this manly exercise, and perhaps are even repelled by “the hunting to death of God's creatures,” that they are largely indebted to the pursuit for the preservation of one of the most



joyous of North Devon experiences—coaching.

A retrospect of locomotion in this country of hill and moor is suggestive of three periods. The first, which may be termed the Horse Age, is that anterior to the year 1819, when John Loudon Macadam was summoned to England and appointed by Parliament to superintend the roads in the Bristol district, then in a deplorable condition. The advent of this pioneer of civilisation had a quickening effect in the construction of new roads and the transformation of old, and marked the opening of a fresh era.

Now visitors had begun to find their way to Lynton many years before these facilities were afforded, and the question may be propounded—How did they manage it? The answer is indicated by the circumstances—some of them walked; others, and perhaps the greater number, requisitioned the services of that friend of man the horse, and the imagination pictures to itself a train of enthusiasts “negociating”

the rugged trackways on hired hacks, the more timid ladies seated on pillions and clinging to the stalwart forms of their male companions. This is not by any means a fancy picture. It is authenticated by evidence. A favourable specimen of the roads in North Devon was the highway leading from Ilfracombe to Barnstaple and Torrington. Narrow and rough, it passed over a track of bleak, uncultivated moorland, rising in places to an altitude of nearly a thousand feet, and one is not surprised to find that it was little frequented except by pack-horses and foot-passengers.

Following these primitive conditions, we infer a gradual transition to the coaching period, which there must have been some attempt to inaugurate as soon as the attractions of the district became known through the encomiums of Southey and the diffusion of guide-books. In a sense this period still continues, but with qualifications. As a means of traction, the horse of flesh has been partially superseded

by the horse of iron, and the area over which coaching is a necessity and a source of profit has steadily contracted. The construction of two converging lines of railway to Barnstaple has resulted in successive extensions to Bideford, Ilfracombe, and Lynton, and ere long Clovelly will be accessible by the same unromantic method of travel.

On the other side, Taunton has stretched out a tentacle to Minehead, and within recent years a project was adumbrated which would have completed the network of railways by establishing a connection between the terminus at Minehead and the rail-head at Lynton.

All this argued a vast amount of energy and speculation, and until it was proposed to annex the last-mentioned district, which would have involved sooner or later the contiguous tract between Lynton and Ilfracombe, no class or interest was sufficiently affected to enter an effective protest against the vulgarisation which a railway is apt to imply. It was here that the

sport of stag-hunting proved beneficially potent in arresting a loathly trespass on its immemorial preserves ; and, for a time at least, beautiful and sublime scenery, the haunt of the red deer, has escaped the rude hand of the implacable engineer.

The exclusion of such noisome reminders of business and bustle seems to have been considerably assisted, if not entirely brought about, by a letter signed by Lord Lovelace, Sir Thomas Acland, and others, and addressed to the editor of the *Times*. The subject is of vital concern to persons of artistic sympathies, and it may be hoped that a reproduction of the protest will aid in staving off an event which, though extremely undesirable, has unfortunately the air of something inevitable.

“ We ask your kind help in calling the attention of all lovers of Exmoor and its stag-hunting to the danger which now threatens the sport in the shape of a projected ‘light railway’ from Minehead *viâ* Porlock to Lynton.

“The proposed line would go right through the beautiful valley of Selworthy, Luccombe and Porlock, and would cut through the coverts which are the favourite resort of the red deer. If it does no other damage, it will very seriously diminish the area of wild country accessible to them. The main purpose of the promoters of the scheme is, we believe, to bring over excursionists from South Wales. No doubt this will enhance the profits of the Cardiff and Minehead piers, but will do a far more serious injury to the district than the mere loss of the sport of stag-hunting.

“One of the principal attractions of that district is that, without being really remote, it is in a greater degree than most holiday resorts exempt from the invasion of Saturday to Monday visitants, and accordingly the woods and paths still have their beauties and their quiet undestroyed and open to all who wish to enjoy them. The consequence is, that the summer and autumn season bring a

steady profit to the hotel-keepers and to all who can let houses or lodgings, or help to supply the wants of lodgers and residents, to say nothing of the wants of stag-hunters, their grooms and their horses.

“But if the contemplated light railway is made, and if from the point of view of its promoters it is a success, there will be an end to all this; and not only will owners and occupiers be compelled to close paths and woods to strangers to preserve themselves from fires and from depredation, but the inhabitants will lose one of their most certain sources of profit.

“In addition to the loss of the attractions above alluded to, if the stag-hunting continues, it can only be in other parts of the moor, for the Cloutsham, Hawkcombe Head and Culbone Stables fixtures will have been rendered useless, and therefore probably be abandoned. Hardly any greater pecuniary loss could be inflicted on the neighbourhood than would be the result of this.

“The project meets with the heartiest



Old Point

Long Point, Sanby
Wilmington, Pa.

and most unanimous opposition from those who are most interested in the prosperity of the district. The farmers of the valley above named have, without exception, signed a protest against it.

“It is simply an attempt made by persons at a distance to turn to their own pecuniary profit the beauties and advantages of a district in which they have no interest whatever.

“The cheapening of the journey to Minehead for a distance of five or six miles is the only possible compensation which can be suggested for an injury which, when once inflicted, can never be repaired.

“We venture, therefore, to hope that all who enjoy Exmoor, or who care for stag-hunting, will assist us in opposing so disastrous a scheme.”

In this authentic pronouncement we have clearly defined the views, aspirations, and self-imposed limitations of coy Lynton, which has always arrogated to itself a certain *aise* and selectness. This condition of tranquil and happy exclusiveness, so

pleasing and flattering to its patrons and so profitable to its inhabitants, is intimately connected with the comparative cost of coaching and the absence of a pier. It is true steamers call *off* Lynton, and I myself have witnessed a boat-load of "trippers" come ashore. The feminine element, which was greatly in the ascendant, was wildly excited, and evidently regarded the landing as a fearful joy not lightly to be "enterprised nor taken in hand."

On the completion of the Taw Vale, or, as it is now called, North Devon Railway, in the late "forties," this was at once recognised as a convenient means of approach, but it does not appear to have killed, though it must have injured, the older method of arrival, which was by coach from Bridgwater or Taunton, and for some reasons decidedly preferable. For one thing the route traversed the lovely land of Quantock, which has precious associations in common with North Devon. It is Wordsworth

who says: "In the spring of the year 1798, Coleridge, my sister, and myself started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon, with a view to visit Linton and the Valley of Stones near to it; and as our united funds were very small, we agreed to defray the expense of the tour by writing a poem, to be sent to the *New Monthly Magazine* set up by Philips the bookseller, and edited by Dr Aikin. Accordingly we set off and proceeded along the Quantock Hills towards Watchet; and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of 'The Ancient Mariner.'"

Well, footing it is good, and some of the sweetest and most ravishing spots on the secluded coast must be left unexplored if the visitor refuse to avail himself of such powers as Nature has endowed him with. Those, however, who are in "the vale of years," or whose physique is not robust, will hail the accommodation of the coach, which will enable them to "view the landscape o'er," and serve as an initiation into the romance of travel

as enjoyed by our forefathers. Athletes also are far from disparaging the progresses of the "Wild West," the "Red Deer," and the "Lorna Doone"; and the *manége* of the coachmen has extorted the admiration of critics who know their business. Take, for instance, the following passage from a recent contribution to the magazine that owns, and may be owned by, a champion of the willow.

"If the sad day comes when the four-horse coach disappears from the main roads of England before the deep-toned hoot of the multi-horsed motor-car, it is safe to say that it will survive, not as a relic of antiquity, but as a present and pleasant necessity on the steep by-roads which are the main roads of mountain, moor, and coast-line in the West Country. The beautiful stretch of country in North Devon, which has perhaps more to offer the tourist and sportsman than any other district in England, has hitherto almost defied the railroad engineer. It is skirted on the south and the west by the railway

and touched on the north; and one marvellous miniature railway winds round hillside and coombe, from Barnstaple to Lynton, perhaps the most beautiful of all the North Devon townlets. But the inter-connection, the penetration of the wide countryside, is still served by coach and horses. The holiday traveller, even now, has scarcely recognised to the full the possibilities of North Devon—a coaching holiday through a wonderful land, at a cost almost absurdly moderate, if trips are well-planned—from Lynton, for instance, as a centre. Not the least pleasure of such a trip is the contemplation of the fine work done by the considerably driven and well-conducted teams of horses, which gamely conquer the long and steep ascents.”

Ah! I marvel what the writer would have said of an erstwhile whip called Barwick, who, like others of his kind, produced an impression of recklessness, though, as regards accidents, he had a perfectly clean sheet. It is, therefore,

only fair to credit him with a reasonable amount of skill and care. But he had one practice which excited the horror of any lady passengers who might be on the outside. In descending the tremendous hill to the far-famed and picturesque Ship Inn at Porlock, when about two hundred yards from the bottom he would check his team, replace the drags, and tightly gathering the reins, flog his four steeds into a gallop down the remainder of the steep.

I forget whether it was Barwick or some other Autolycus that occupied the box when—twenty years ago—we were coasting at a lively pace down the precipitous Countisbury Hill into Lynmouth. The seat behind the driver was full to overflowing, and, being the last up, I could keep only one pedal extremity on the foot-board; the other was dangling helplessly over the low wall, on the further side of which was perdition. Suddenly the lady who sat next me lost nerve, clutched the collar of my coat, and spring-

ing convulsively to her feet, exclaimed in hysterical tones, "Oh, what lovely scenery!" There would have been scenery for me, I trow, if my fair neighbour, by another spasmodic movement, had sent me hurtling over that low wall!

This brings me to the point. Hitherto the talk has been of boundaries, coaches and horses, railways and the enemies of railways—in other words, we have touched but the framework of the subject. Now that we have disposed of these preliminaries, now that we have arrived, it is time that we asked ourselves why, like a swarm of locusts, we have settled on North Devon, fastidious North Devon. Let us confess our faith, clarify our consciences, and look to our reputations; let us never succumb to the gibe of mere *Schwärmerei*. Enthusiasm is very well, but it must have an object, it must be capable of defence, and we are going to find all the defence that cynic or philosopher can require of us in the one truthful and comprehensive word—scenery.

“How green the upland! and how wild the way
O’er which the torrent tumbles in its might,
And blue the alder-shaded pools, where play
Round golden patens rich with summer light!

“Then leaning o’er huge boulders in the stream,
We see the fronds of lady-ferns outspread;
And now, as lovely as a poet’s dream,
The seagull waves his white wings overhead.

“This paragon of beauty by the sea,
When waves with foam-fans kiss the rocky shore,
We have as ours—”

CAPERNE.

It was the scenery that lured Coleridge and Wordsworth and Southey to this glorious alpine land, and, with its subtle magic, will lure generations of gentle, refined spirits attuned to its harmonies, which they will strive to render in some visionary transcript—“love’s sweet work and fruit.” Blackmore’s wizardry has no doubt been efficacious in attracting myriads of faithful votaries to the Valley of Rocks, but Blackmore did not, in any sense, make Lynton. God made Lynton. What Blackmore did was to evolve the living forms, to supply the gracious human



UNTON VALLEY OF ROCKS

touches. Before he came Lynton was not altogether unlike one of Claude's masterpieces, in which the figures are unessential, and, indeed, such sorry accessories that the artist himself declared he made no charge for them. Blackmore endowed it with a gallery of unforgettable portraits—Lorna, John and Annie Ridd, Fry, Betty Muxworthy, Squire Whichehalse, Mother Meldrum—which redeem the solitude more truly and sufficingly than the season's tide of fashion that flows to ebb. It is the cue of the young bloods of criticism (who have no understanding of the epic and aim at an impossible superiority) to cheapen Blackmore as an involuntary advertisement quack, who has unfairly secured the suffrages of the "million." But the large commonsense of his multitudinous admirers merely confirms the propriety of sane and sober judges in categorically rejecting the smart paradox and irreverent vain denial of premature coroners.

Still Lynton is independent of Lorna ;

and having already dealt with the locality as a province of the Blackmore country, it is needless for me to do more than allude to this glamour of high and noble romance. I return to my text—scenery. The character of the scene that furnished the lady of alarums with a pretext for manslaughter, or something unpleasantly approaching it, is familiar enough even to those who have never been in North Devon—a great cone rising abruptly from the sea, dotted with villas embowered in trees and shrubs, and scored with intersecting paths. Nestling at its foot is the fishing village of Lynmouth, which keeps many a quaint trace of primitive simplicity. The hill whereon Lynton stands is about eight hundred feet in height, and, curious to mention, its conical shape is repeated, on a very much smaller scale, in the crags of the Valley of Rocks. Some two miles west of the town, this valley is a freak of Nature, who appears to have set herself to mimic the ways of the quarrelsome. The grotesque, castellated

fragments are actually arranged in tiers, and it calls for only a slight exercise of the imagination to conceive of the scene as the ruins of a Titanic stronghold, the proud abode of the Sons of Earth :

“ Before our forests heard the talk of men,
Before the first of Druids was a child.”

The Countisbury Foreland is less wonderful and impresses chiefly by its boldness. But it has its uses. “ The Foreland rocks of North Devon,” says an eminent geologist, “ may rather be regarded as an eyry from which we may admire the surrounding scenery than as at all attractive in themselves, but looking from the Foreland past Desolation Point, the bold seaward slope of the masked cliff-line and the absence of foreshore, with the barren hill-tops above, constitute a *tout ensemble* which is by no means despicable to the lover of Nature ; as when the sun is up and flitting clouds play their wind-driven shadows over the slopes and on the clefts and gullies, in chequer work of golden light with sombre red and grey ; or when

the white foam drives angrily against that little envious bourne of cliff we wish to get at, and all overhead is dark with brewing storm, save where ominous cold light breaks in through the dun sky, and the shrill plaint of the sea-mew, borne on its strident wing, is well attuned to the scene—then Desolation Point looks its name.”

Mr Ussher was by no means the first to discover the value of these altitudes as posts of observation. The fort on Oldborough Down, which some have supposed to be Danish, and which is one of the most perfect specimens of castramentation in the country, is proof positive of the truth of this observation. In the piping times of peace the sweets of climbing have appealed to adventurous visitors—perhaps I should say the *bitter-sweets*. Here is a memory.

Everybody who knows Lynton knows the Lyndale Hotel, which has on one side the sea and on the other a rocky, almost perpendicular eminence, 150 feet in height.

On the top of this steep, and standing at the very edge of the precipice, is, or was, a small summer-house commanding a good view of the sea and the Welsh coast beyond. The harbour was plainly visible from the windows of the hotel, and used to tantalise people with an irresistible longing to emulate the hero of *Excelsior*, who, it will be recollected, fell a victim to his lofty aspiration. But for the providence of Mine Host, an untoward fate might have overtaken his impulsive guests, who, having clambered half-way up, found the going more and more difficult at every step, and at last reached a point where they could neither continue the ascent nor return whence they had come. Meanwhile, warned by experience of what would happen, the hotel servants held themselves in readiness, and on hearing the inevitable cries for help, proceeded by a circuitous path to the summit. Thence they let down a rope with a running noose, always kept for such emergencies, and the disconcerted tourists, having placed the

loop under their armpits, were hauled up the face of the rock, like Sir Arthur and his party in *The Antiquary*.

Speaking generally, the North Devon hills are of a structure demanding to be taken seriously, and the climb from Lynmouth to Lynton, a study in conic sections, was a fascinating problem of stages and degrees, until the Gordian knot was mercifully cut by the Cliff Railway, which now renders calculation unnecessary. This modern contrivance, however, is clearly not the "last word" in the science already well advanced by the invention of the motor car. The region is exceptionally adapted to the vagaries of the airship, which will enable us to obtain genuine bird's-eye views, and the coming of which was, in the early seventeenth century, dimly foreseen by the North Devon peasants, who had visions of flying dragons. Westcote's narrative is piquant, and 'twere pity to miss this opportunity of citing so excellent a fable.

"Near Challacomb," he says, "the peas-

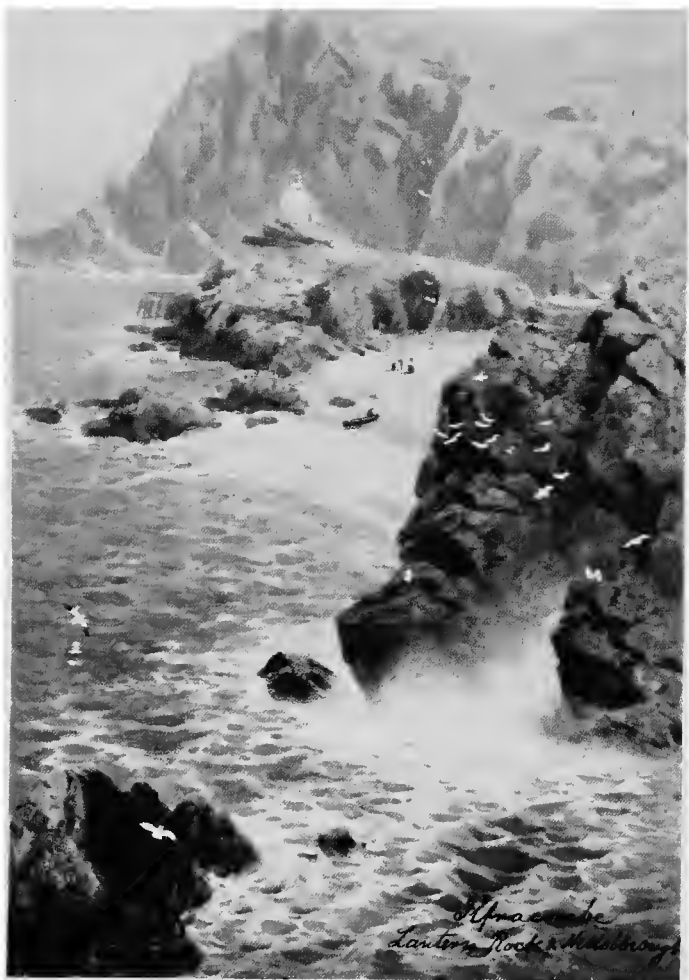
ant used to speak of seeing divers dragons flying about and lighting on the hillocks round, and that two good fellows living not far from Woodburrow were told by one who set up for a conjuror that in the hillock there was a great brass pan, and therein much treasure both of silver and gold, which if they would move, he promised to secure them from all danger, so he might have his share with them. They needed but little persuasion, and from friendship admitted a fourth to their secret, one whom they knew to be handy indeed. But he shrank from such a course to wealth, absolutely refused to help them, but respected their secret.

“The other two, with profession of mythical science, proceed, come to the place, and set to work so earnestly that before long they come to a pan covered with a large stone ; at this and with their helper’s encouragement they follow up their previous efforts, for he had told them that if they fainted when it was in sight it would be taken from them and all

their labour lost. Now the cover was to be opened and the strongest fellow at work, but he was suddenly taken with such a faintness that he could neither work nor scarce stand; and therefore called to the other to supply his place, which he presently did, and was surprised with a like faintness, which continued not long with either. Their guide told them the birds were flown away and the nest only left, and this was true. When they lifted away the stone there was nothing at all but the bottom thereof, where the treasure would seem to have been, very bright and clean, and the rest all eaten with cankered rust. The relator protested he saw the pan, and the others corroborated what he said."

Those dragons were certainly the air-ships which we shall presently see careering from Lynton to Lundy, and from Lundy to Lantern Hill, when those elevations will be eyries in a more literal sense than Mr Ussher intended.

That day, when it comes, will probably



Alfred Combe
Lantern Rock, Massachusetts

be fatal to the study he has done so much to promote and adorn. Even in a less hasting age many mistakes have been made. To take simple instances, Whyte-Melville, in narrating Katerfelto's run with the stag-hounds, speaks of granite somewhere near Lynton. No granite is to be found near Lynton any more than alabaster at the bottom of the Devil's Limekiln, on Lundy Island, which is said—not by Whyte-Melville, but by Gosse in his *Land and Water*—to be strewn with large blocks of it. The so-called alabaster is really white quartz. In a well-known handbook the Foreland sandstones are described as the lowest beds of the Carboniferous formation instead of Lower Devonian, and the writer, waxing very bold, pronounces the grits and sandstones of the cliffs at the end of the Valley of Rocks identical in appearance with the “vesicular volcanic ash” of Brent Tor. For this formidable periphrasis might have been substituted “tufa,” and even “tuff.” And this is a warning that the author of

a book for "folk of holiday" may not be too technical; but he is perhaps within his province in indicating with a light hand the treasures and pleasures that lie stored beneath the soil or scattered on the surface for the mind equipped for appropriating them. It is quite a delusion to suppose that knowledge of Mother Earth's anatomy extinguishes love and appreciation of her exterior and transient charms. The geologist can delight, with the poet or as a poet, in the golden sunbeams piercing the leafy trellis to shed their benediction on the bridal of the Lyns at Watersmeet; he can watch with sympathy the labours of the artist as he strives to copy the delicately varying tones of the Ilfracombe slates — steel-grey, silver-grey, and grey with russet blent; and he can do so all the more because, while following his vocation, he has been drawn insensibly into the sphere of comparative æsthetics.

The connection between the character of the rock and the quality of the scenery, though real, is subtle and elusive; there

are exceptions and equivalents, and, as a factor of loveliness, locality counts as well as material. In West Somerset, for instance, on the coast-line and in the river gorges of North Devon the hideously-named Hangman Grits serve as a basis of beauty, but in North Devon generally they are associated with "a land of brown heath," very unattractive. The dominant features, such as Chapman Barrows and the Ilfracombe tors, are composed of Ilfracombe slate. The junction between the slates and grits of the Middle Devonian can be observed in a fine cliff section in Combmartin Bay.

This reminds me that the pursuit is sometimes attended with difficulties and dangers. The oldest beds in North Devon are the Foreland Grits, and the cliffs of the small tract of territory they occupy are masked with talus and end in low rock-faced bases by the beach. In order to mark the relations between these beds and the Lynton series, one has to descend to those bases, but, as one approaches the

goal, the incline grows steeper or the stream of stone carries one along too impetuously, and the effort has to be abandoned.

“Folk of holiday” may not care to be troubled with more particulars of petrology, while geologists proper do not need to be informed that our area of two hundred square miles includes a third great division, the Upper Devonian, on which it is impossible to bestow even superficial attention. It must suffice to open the eyes of the lay brethren to the incomparable advantages of the district for burrowing into a subject which the hurry of the age menaces with neglect. All, however, like to learn the statures of the hills, and so a slight extension may be forgiven. Hall Hill, near Countisbury, is said to be 1145 feet high, Little Hangman is rather over 750 feet, and Great Hangman 1083 feet. Chapman Barrows rises to an altitude of 1540 feet, and Span Head, on the borders of Exmoor, is 1610 feet above the level of the sea. Sherry-

combe Gorge, between Great Hangman and Holdstone Down, used to be a haunt of the *asplenium marinum*, or sea-fern, and, if any specimens yet remain, it is to be hoped that visitors will be considerate enough to spare them. With some compunction I reveal the secret, and also the existence, of such rare flowers as the Welsh poppy in the Lyn valleys. But the fact is not to be gainsaid that Lynton and Lynmouth owe much of their sweetness to their floral resources. The other day I lit on a description of those places penned by someone—I know not the writer's name, but, whoever he be, he has a pretty talent for word-painting—which is as good as a water-colour drawing, and does just homage to the rich profusion of this matchless bravery.

“Round about us are pretty cottages, some gleaming white, and some of grey stone. On this one the bright pink flowers of the ivy-geranium cluster so thickly that the leaves are hidden flat against the walls. On one the dark

crimson flowers of the fuchsia clamber to the height of the roof, and another is all ablaze with that beautiful tropoleum known as the 'morning glory.' Each dwelling has some flowering characteristic of itself. On both sides of the stream the hills rise steeply; here densely clothed with pines and oaks and firs, and there towering, precipitous and bare, in sharp and bold relief against the sky. Lights are now beginning to flash out from the cottages and hotels nestling in the verdure of the cliffs and rocks, and as the moon crescent of bright silver sinks from sight over one of the nearer hills, the scene calls up memories of some ideal evening at Lucerne.

"Lynmouth may well be called the Switzerland of England. The village nestles in a valley just as most Swiss ones do. If not as deep as most Swiss valleys are, the effect is similar, so closely do the hill-tops stand to each other. The foliage is much the same, and the cottages and hotels are scattered about and gabled



much the same—some peeping from nooks and crannies, and others standing boldly out on the rock ledges. In one respect it has an advantage over most Swiss villages, for there is a much brighter glow of colour over everything. The red sandstone crops out everywhere along the great stretches of cliff on either side, the newly-turned soil is deep red instead of brown and black, the crimson heath outvies the paler ling on the moors, the bracken begins to assume in early July the glorious hues associated with the late autumn in our northern regions, the stone walls and banks are thickly draped from top to bottom with that most beautiful of all flowering trailers, the ivy-leaf toad-flax, rarely found even in Derbyshire, and from walls and rocks and garden hedges alike spring giant clusters of red, pink, and white valerian. The evening primrose is a comparative rarity in northern gardens ; in Devonshire its large flowers give golden glow to the hedges and sweet scent to many of the field paths. The white and

pink foxgloves flourish equally with the common red, and there are places where even Canterbury bells and Sweet Williams rear their flowers in wild luxuriance over the waving grasses."

CHAPTER II

A CONTRAST IN COMBES

THIS book has a westward drift, and, in its literary reference, should exhale Kingsley rather than Blackmore. I have said that the latter rendered peculiar service to Lynton (by which term, as before, pray understand the town *and neighbourhood*) in that he made it, not historic exactly, but quasi-historic, for men wrangle about the Doones. With Combmartin, whither we are to proceed, circumstances are different. Here we have a village with a really important—"formidable," some-one calls it—history, and, what is more, with a collective historic sense, which has minded episodes in our national life that many villages, and, it is to be feared,

towns and cities, have forgotten. We shall come to them presently.

Combmartin is not lovely, and its uncomeliness has been immortalised by Kingsley, who vilipends the place in a strain of high insult—"There is Combe-Martin, mile-long man-stye, which seven centuries of fruitless silver mining, and of the right (now deservedly lost) of 'sending a talker to the national palaver,' have neither cleansed nor civilised." Since the year 1849, when this censure was first published in *Fraser's Magazine*—it has been disinterred thence and republished in successive editions of the author's works, thus putting the parish to a perpetual shame—the question of styes has occupied the attention of the powers that be. They have been adjudged nuisances and forbidden to exist, man-styes anywhere, pig-styes within a certain distance—is it thirty feet?—of a well or source of drinking supply. As the village remains, it may be assumed that during the interval an improvement has been effected on the

insalubrious conditions that provoked that terrible indictment. But Combmartin is still Combmartin in the sense of being straggling and untidy, and a Redistribution Bill ought not to be long delayed. Then perhaps we should hear less of "that ugliest of villages," "a blot upon the landscape," and such-like criticisms and compliments.

If the village is dull and somewhat too redolent of that rustic squalor which was the fine on so much that was charming in the style of Old England, in quitting Lynton for Combmartin we by no means bid adieu to the magnificent prospects that ennoble the North Devon coast and charge it with the pageantry and renown of an enchanted realm. Wherever we go—along the coast—there is provided a continual feast for the eye. And here one should heed the interpolated hint and implied caution, since two routes are open to us, and, as we are avowedly in quest of scenery, it will be policy to shun the broad way which leads to—Combmartin. The

narrow way over the cliffs is *our* road, and, being a bridle-path, sets before us the same alternatives as confronted our ancestors in the pre-Macadam period signalised in the previous chapter. We must either ride or walk. Probably it may be a good thought to hand on a warning addressed to the writer many years ago, when he was first summoned to make his election, and intimate to the less hardy and adventurous that there is just a spice of danger in dipping into the coves and inlets of this rugged shore.

And so away by the Valley of Rocks, past Lee Bay and Wooda Bay, with their wealth of ferns and sights of ships a-sailing, to Martinhoe town, of which there is no more than church and rectory and a solitary farmhouse, and thence to the Hunter's Inn, which is a half-mile from Heddon's Mouth. There are no lovelier views than those of the Heddon valley, edged with gorgeous woods, through which the stream courses in natural waterfalls.

As for the Mouth, it is one of a series of glens formed by the escapes of streamlets into the Atlantic Ocean, of which Kingsley observes :

“Each is like the other, and each is like no other English scenery. Each has its upright walls, inland of rich oak wood, nearer the sea of dark green furze, then of smooth turf, then of weird black cliffs, which range out right and left into the deep sea, in castles, spires, and wings of jagged ironstone. Each has its narrow strip of fertile meadow, its crystal trout-stream, winding across and across from one hill-foot to the other ; its grey stone mill, with the water sparkling and humming round the dripping wheel ; its dark rock pools above the tide-mark, where the salmon-trout gather in from their Atlantic wanderings, after each autumn flood ; its ridge of brown sand, bright with golden trefoil and crimson lady’s finger ; its grey bank of polished pebbles, down which the stream rattles to the sea below. Each has its black field of jagged shark’s-tooth

rock, which paves the cove from side to side, streaked with, here and there, a pink line of shell sand, and laced with white foam from the eternal surge, stretching in parallel lines out to the westward, in strata set upright on edge or tilted towards each other at strange angles by primeval earthquakes. Such is the 'Mouth,' as those coves are called, and such the jaw of teeth which they display, one rasp of which would grind abroad the timbers of the stoutest ship. To landward, all richness, softness, and peace; to seaward, a waste and howling wilderness of rock and roller, barren to the fisherman, and hopeless to the shipwrecked mariner."

From Heddon's Mouth to Combmartin there is, again, a choice of routes. One may wind round the cliff to Trentishoe and then cross the purple heights of Great and Little Hangman, or take the ordinary cliff road, which also passes through Trentishoe. Whichever course be adopted, the traveller will be thankful for those sixteen miles of lofty hill and cloven

ravine, oak-clad precipice and wild and storm-rent coast, which by an inland detour he would have missed. "Hoe"—a common North Devon suffix—means "hill"; in South Devon we find it in "Plymouth Hoe." It has nothing to do with the nautical expression, "Westward Ho!" which, thanks to Kingsley, has become localised.

As for the odious name "Hangman," the celebrated Fuller supplies a sort of *ex post facto* elucidation, which may be described as plausible. The name existed, and the story was begotten between it and the appetite for mutton—formerly so marked a trait of underfed peasants. "Near Combmartin," he says, "is the hanging stone, one of the bound stones which part Combmartin from the next parish. It received this name from a thief, who, having stolen a sheep, and tied it about his neck to carry it on his back, rested himself for a time upon this stone, which is about a foot high, until the sheep, struggling, slid over the stone on the other

side and strangled the man." The pundit laughs at this easy and obvious explanation, and insists that the name, sadly corrupted, is compounded of the Keltic *maen* (a "stone") and the Cornish qualifying article *an*. Well—may be. "Combe," at any rate, is *cwm* (a "valley"), so that the etymology would not be isolated.

Reference has been made to the historical importance and historical cunning of Combmartin, with a promise of more. The "hanging matter" can hardly be palmed off as a fulfilment of the promise, nor can the earlier quotation from Kingsley, inserted for a different object, be produced as a full, perfect, and complete satisfaction of that solemn engagement. Indeed, Kingsley's versions of history furnish ample scope for the peddling revision of lilliputian investigators, and the writer, after his kind, intends to take joyous advantage of the same. Three questions present themselves in the following order:—

Firstly, Is there evidence to show that



Wracombe
Bathing Port
from Torrs Walk

W. H. H. H.

the silver mines at Combmartin were worked seven and a half centuries ago?

Secondly, Has the industry been unprofitable?

Thirdly, Had Combmartin the right of sending a talker to the national palaver?

The reply to the first question is that the mines are known to have been exploited in the reign of the first Edward, and grants made to the miners by Edmund, the King's brother, were confirmed by charter in 1305. Whether this date or that of Edward's accession—1272—will warrant conjecture in extending the span of argentiferous life by a century and a half is beside the mark. Conjecture is not history, and, if it were, would be elastic enough to embrace a far more distant era, since Dr Kingdon toys with the possibility of Phœnician enterprise in North Devon. The "ships of Tarshish" certainly brought silver and gold every three years, and Mr Wade cautiously propounds the theory that the latter came "indirectly" from "such places as" Comb-

martin. Thus we see that Kingsley was either too bold or not bold enough. He should have impounded the Phoenicians, or been content with the Plantagenets.

The fact is, that great man seems to have allowed himself to be too much engrossed with the Tudors, and thus to have neglected their predecessors; otherwise it is inexplicable that he should have indulged in the gibe of unfruitfulness. Why, we have actual statistics showing that in the twenty-second year of Edward the First's reign, 270 lbs. weight of silver was yielded by the Devon silver mines—those of Beer Alston and Combmartin. Two years later the produce was increased to 704 lbs. 3 dwts., and three years later native labour was supplemented by the importation of miners from Derbyshire and Wales. Fruitless? It is a calumny. "Great was the profit in silver and lead," and, as war must be financed, it is scarcely an exaggeration to declare that the battles of Cressy and Poitiers, ay, and the battle of Agincourt too, were won in the shafts

of Combmartin. But if Kingsley was not aware of these circumstances, he might surely have known that in the favoured reign of the Great Eliza a new silver mine was discovered by Adrian Gilbert, a half-brother of Sir Walter Raleigh, and John Poppler, a "lapidary," that a Sir Bevis Bulmer contracted for half the profits, and that each of the partners compiled £10,000. For the later incidents of the mines, with which Kingsley was no doubt acquainted, and which give colour to his sweeping assertion of failure, the reader is dutifully referred to *The Blackmore Country*, where the subject is treated in some detail.

In 1327 a writ was directed to the "Ballés et Ville de Combe-Martyn," requiring them to stop people from leaving the kingdom. As the country was distracted with quarrels between great personages, fomented by "priests of Baal" and "ministers of Belial," this ukase would rather point to a *sauve qui peut* on the part of peaceable individuals, but the

unlucky Edward of Carnarvon was just then attempting to reach Lundy, so as to escape the fangs of his French Jezebel and her party ; hence it has been thought probable that the caution was aimed particularly at him. Anyhow, "bailiffs and town" sounds promising as a hint of possible representation.

Combmartin was unquestionably a borough—old Westcote's researches make that perfectly plain. He states that it "deryveth its name from the situation beinge a low and deepe valley surrounded with very high hills (towards the sea excepted), and the addition of Martins from Le Sieur Martin de Turon, a man of much worth and assistant to William, Duke of Normandye, when he conquered this land, of whom he had this with other great possessions given him. This powerful family (afterwards created barons of Barnstaple, Dartington and Camvis in Wales) procured this town to be made a borough, with the privileges of waifs, estrays, wrecks, felons' goods, assize of

bread and ale, and pillory ; with a market on Thursday, and a fair on Whitsun Monday."

Here, in all probability, we have the sole evidence on which Kingsley depended in making the brave assertion that Combmartin had the right of sending a talker to the national palaver. He seems to have imagined that the term "borough" necessarily implies the right ; but that is not the case, and in no accessible list of Devon parliamentary towns can the name "Combmartin" be found. We may be fairly certain that Westcote knew of no such right, or he would have included it with the other privileges which appear to define the meaning of "borough" in this connection. Sending a talker to the national palaver was, in ancient days, rather a duty than a privilege, as the talker had to be paid by his constituents ; hence the arrival of a writ would have occasioned dismay rather than joy at Combmartin, condemned to support a "detrimental."

Combmartin is a rare place for tradition. Whilst the country in general is mindful of Guy Fawkes and becoming almost too well-bred for that, our village has its own peculiar *bête noire* in an Earl of Tyrone, whom it formerly exhibited in an annual "gaudy" on Ascension Day. This show has fallen into disuse, but its features are not forgotten, and, as the Sherborne and Warwick pageants testify to a renascence of summer spectacles, we do not despair of a revival of the North Devon festival.

What Combmartin remembers—somewhat hazily, perhaps—is that in 1565 an insurrection broke out in Ireland under one Shane O'Neill, a son of the Earl of Tyrone, and that a number of Devon adventurers offered to conquer and hold a province in Ireland at their own expense, if Queen Elizabeth would give it to them. Early in the reign of James I. the Red Hand of Erin suffered brief captivity in England, and Combmartin says he landed from a skiff on her shore. The rebellion



Uracombe
The Capstone

of another O'Neill in the time of the Commonwealth may have served to keep alive the memory of those events.

The Earl of 'Rone, 'tis averred, landed with certain companions and wandered about the countryside, till he was pursued and captured by a band of soldiers, in Lady Wood; and the "hunting" of this shadowy, more or less mythical, refugee was the pretext of the Ascensontide sport, absorbing or extruding the beating of the bounds and the procession on Maundy Thursday, in one or other of which the performance may have originated. The earl wore a mask and a smock frock padded with straw, whilst round his neck hung a chain of ship-biscuits. There was also a hobby-horse, clad with painted trappings, and provided with an instrument described as a "mapper," which looks like a misprint for snapper. Anyhow, it represented the mouth of a horse, and its teeth and jaws were capable of opening and shutting with rapidity.

Another animal took part in the pro-

cession—namely, a donkey, which was decorated with flowers and a necklace of threaded ship bread; and the martial element consisted of a group of grotesquely attired grenadiers. For a whole week before the date of the performance the procession paraded the town and parish, drawing crowds of interested spectators from the country round. When at length the blissful day arrived, all turned out in their best “bib and tucker,” and at three o’clock in the afternoon the grenadiers, filing into the wood where the earl lay concealed in a bush, fired a volley. The poor wounded nobleman was thereupon seized and placed on the donkey, his face towards Neddy’s tail. In this humiliating posture he was conducted in triumph through the village, and the procession was joined by the hobby and a fool.

At sundry resting-places (supposed to be reminiscent of the Stations of the Cross in more pious ages) the soldiers discharged their pieces, and the earl, again wounded, dropped from his steed amidst the jubila-

tion of the grenadiers, whilst the hobby-horse and the fool lamented. Ultimately the sympathetic buffoon supplanted the Earl of 'Rone on the donkey, but his chief office was to levy contributions for the refreshment of himself and the other actors,—who paused from time to time for the identical purpose. Along the street ran a gutter, in which the fool dipped a besom, and if anybody declined subscribing, he was sprinkled with it. If he still remained recalcitrant, he was grabbed by the hobby-horse with his “mapper,” and held until the ransom was forthcoming.

Unlike Lynton, Combmartin seems to have had its castle. The oaks on the south side of the churchyard are called the Park Trees, and in the adjacent meadow have been traced the foundations of the outer walls of a castle, surrounded by a moat. The manor passed from the last lord to his steward, and by him was dissipated, sold piecemeal, with the result that much of the land in the parish is still in the hands

of small proprietors. The story of the last lord of Combmartin, well told by the Rev. G. Tugwell, and, after him, by Mr Wade, is tragic indeed. It runs thus :

“The last lord of the manor had an only and well-beloved son, whose love of hunting was always leading him into the heart of Exmoor in pursuit of the red deer, which then abounded, as they do now, in that wild country.

“One bright autumnal morning he rode away as usual at break of dawn, accompanied only by his hounds, and as he passed the castle gates he told the ancient porter, with a laugh, to expect a good night’s rest, for he was only going to the borders of the moor, and should be home long before nightfall. But the evening closed in, and he did not come ; night fell, and he did not come ; hour after hour passed away, and he did not come. At length it was supposed that at the end of his day’s hunting he had found himself far from home, and (as he had done before) had taken shelter for the night elsewhere.

So the porter raised the drawbridge and barred the castle gates.

“Just then the moon sank behind the hills, and black windy clouds began to roll up from over the sea. An hour later the young man rode rapidly down the hillside into the valley, his hounds lagging wearily behind. He neared the castle, which, when he was within a stone’s throw of it, was indistinguishable in the pitchy darkness: still he pushed rapidly along the well-known road. At last his horse stopped with a sudden frightened motion: he spurred him angrily—there was a leap forward in the darkness—a sullen splash—a shrill scream and a hoarse cry—and then profound silence, as the black waters of the moat closed over their victims. The broken-hearted father sold the estate and wandered away—to die before long in a foreign land—and so the manor was dismembered, and the castle became a heap of ruins.”

Before quitting Combmartin it may be as well to refer to an interesting custom

connected with St George's Day. Comparatively little notice is now taken of the festival, but formerly the rector, acting for the governors of the National School, entrusted the master with forty sixpences to be allotted to the poor folk, in accordance with the bequest of a Mr *George Ley*. With the forty silver sixpences jingling in his pocket the "skulmaister" set out on his errand of charity, and, in anticipation of his coming, the old men and women—anxiety writ large on their wrinkled countenances—might be seen standing at their cottage doors on either side of the long street, as far as the eye could reach. The office of almoner has since passed to the clerk of the Parish Council, and the forty sixpences are distributed, no longer on St George's Day, but at Christmas.

Again the question presents itself—to walk or coach. Once I recollect reaching Combmartin on foot after meritorious exertions on the cliffs. It was September, the shades of evening were falling, and, I

confess, I was tired. Just then the coach came rattling along, and I succumbed. Being lightly clad, I found the drive on the outside decidedly chilling, but was compensated by the beautiful phantasmagoria of the Severn Sea. Those nocturnes will ever live in my memory as gifts of the gods.

A late acquaintance of mine, Mr John Sharland, had a more exciting twilight experience. He was driving, and, after he had passed Watermouth Castle, took the wrong turn. Slowly he mounted the steep ascent of Hillsborough, and the way became narrower and more difficult, until it approached the verge of a precipice with a hedge on one side and the sea, a hundred feet below, on the other. The rocky path was barely the width of the carriage, and so uneven as to resemble steps.

After leading his horse for some distance up this perilous incline, as there appeared to be no exit, my friend became thoroughly alarmed. Far below were

discernible the lights of Watermouth—not a house or cottage nearer; and although he sounded the whistle attached to his overcoat, it was with little hope or expectation of attracting assistance. To return was impossible—both horse and carriage would have been dashed for a certainty over the brink. Bad as it seemed, the only course was to go on. Fortunately the animal stood quiet, and my friend, leaving him for a moment, clambered to the summit to reconnoitre.

He discovered that the path led to the gate of a ploughed field. He planted the gate wide open, and descending to the spot where he had left his belongings, induced the poor brute of a horse to “jump” the carriage up the remainder of the steep.

Some time elapsed, and Mr Sharland, being again at Ilfracombe, walked over Hillsborough with a friend to revisit the scene of his adventure. He found that in one place part of the path that he had traversed with his horse and carriage

had broken away and dropped into the sea.

But about Watermouth. The caves, of course, must be seen, and the entrance of the rock-bound harbour is so narrow that, as has been well expressed, "the sea looks as if it were caught unawares and imprisoned." Hence the name "Smallmouth Caves." In Gosse's *Devonshire Coast* (p. 294) may be found the following good description of these recondite recesses :—

"Just at this point a path leads off from the main road which conducts the traveller by a steep descent into a glen, rough with boulders, and situated at the head of a long narrow inlet confined between precipices, and swept by the advancing tide. A stranger might leave this cove with the impression that he had seen all it had to display, but if he turn into a narrow opening in the rock on the right he will be rewarded by a sight of more than ordinary sublimity and beauty. A great natural tunnel opens before him, perforated

in the solid rock. The roof is nearly horizontal, but the sides spring out into angular groins and projecting buttresses. The interior of this archway is as dark as night. The prospect beheld through this cavern is a lovely one, and reminds the beholder of a sunny picture set in an ample black frame. His eye ranges across the beautiful bay of Combmartin—on the opposite side of which are the red cliffs of the Hangman, softened and mellowed in the distance.

“If the visitor now retrace his steps, and, crossing the cove, examine the rock on the opposite side, he will find a long and narrow perpendicular fissure. After pursuing this gallery for a score yards or so, he finds himself in an area open to the sky, and leading away to the right and left. On either hand is another natural archway; that on the right resembles the one just described, and looks out upon the same scene. The one on the left is essentially similar, but, as it leads inland, it may be traversed, and the explorer will

Uffracombe
from H. H. H. H. H.

H. H. H. H. H.



find himself at the end of the arch, at the bottom of a deep circular pit, whose precipitous sides are fringed with matted brambles, whence it derives its name of Briar Cove. At first there seems no mode of escape from this prison, except through the gallery by which the visitor entered ; but a careful examination reveals a narrow pathway among the bushes, which climbs up one side to daylight and liberty on the downs above."

Here also we are not far from Bishop Jewel's birthplace. Reasonable doubt may be felt whether Jewel is generally a name to conjure with, so it is perhaps expedient to state that he became a "father" of the Church of England when that church cut herself loose from Rome, was the author of an *Apology for the Church of England*, and, as a controversialist, practised the virtue of restraint. This is more than can be said of his fiery opponent, Dr Harding, who, strange to relate, was born in the next parish—Combmartin—and educated at the same

school—at Barnstaple. Thus it might almost be alleged that they were

“nursed upon the self-same hill,
Fed the same flock, by fountain, shade and rill.”

The circumstance, however, did not prevent Harding from running to the extreme limit of savage invective: “As I cannot well take a hair from your lying beard, so I wish I could pluck malice from your blasphemous heart.” Jewel’s reply is admirable—a striking lesson in dignity and moderation:

“Good Christian reader—I have set before thee certain principal flowers of Mr Harding’s modest speech. Taste no more than may well like thee, and judge thereof as thou shalt see cause.”

This learned and excellent man, to judge by his portrait, was not handsome, and he lived and died a bachelor. But it does not follow that he had not some romance—perchance amongst these very hills. At any rate, he was not a stranger to sentiment, for, engraved on his seal, he carried always the name of his mother—“Bellamy.”

If these few hints avail to create or revive interest in the great Elizabethan divine, come with me and behold the place of his nativity. Turning up the Watermouth valley, you first look into the church, where doubtless Jewel was baptized, although there is no record of the event, registers not having been instituted until twenty or thirty years after. Past the cottages where the old rectory once stood, up the rugged and oftentimes watery path to the valley's end, leaving on the right Cock Hill, Cocked-hat Hill, or Cuckoo Hill—the last variation the most poetical, but least suggestive of a remarkable natural object—and then you arrive at a gate, whence there is easy access to the homestead. “Buden” the name was once spelled; now it is “Bowden.” Being “in the lew,” as West-country people express it—that is, away from the wind—the house commands no view from the windows, and the rooms, though large, are dark and low-roofed. The generation which built the dwelling

had not our ideas of comfort. But that is not the point—its merit is that here John Jewel was born and spent his early years.

Hence we may cross the Barnstaple and Berrynarbor road to Chambercombe, and so to Ilfracombe—not a great matter.

Among the compositions of the late Edward Capern, a poet of the people, born at Tiverton, but domesticated in the north-west of Devon, is a piece entitled “A Memory of Wildersmouth, 1837.” It is to be found in a volume called *Sungleams and Shadows*, of which he presented me with a copy in February 1892, kindly remarking, “The book will soon be out of print, and it will always be a pleasant thought to me that we became acquainted just in the nick of time for you to secure a copy.” In the poem referred to are the following lines:—

“Oft have I, journeying over life’s long mile,
Seen many a fairy form of maiden grace,
Whose dimpled cheek and captivating wile
Beam’d forth beneath a fall of dainty lace.

A CONTRAST IN COMBES 71

But never one did so my soul beguile
As she who met me where the Wilder meets
The wild Atlantic surge, that rolls and beats
Against the rocky ramparts of the Isle."

This, it seems to me, is the essence of Ilfracombe—a place for forming personal associations, with the Capstone Rocks for a background, and, possibly, to the accompaniment of a band. History, as the late Mr R. N. Worth discovered, the town has practically none, nor can it boast any great men, unless a reforming friar, one John Cutcliffe, be fetched out of the heart of the Middle Ages to occupy the vacant pedestal. Archæology is represented by St Nicholas' Chapel (or what survives of it), and that, I grant, is worthy of attention. On the whole, however, Ilfracombe is endeared, or the reverse, by what it has been *to us*, by our chapter of reminiscences. It is a social, large-hearted, modern, democratic, romantic, laughter-loving spot, which has nothing of Lynton's coy exclusiveness, and has adopted as its motto, "The more the merrier."

The spirit of all-embracing hospitality finds utterance in a local directory, which asserts, with equal pride and veracity: "Few towns in Devon can compete in popularity with this well-known seaside resort"; and, that there may be no excuse for lagging, proceeds to state: "Quick trains run from Exeter in connection with Waterloo. Accommodation is ample. London, 6 hours; Southampton, $5\frac{3}{4}$; Birmingham, 8; Manchester, $9\frac{1}{2}$; Liverpool, 10." It is also good to know—for some reason the information has been suppressed—that there is, or was, an "Ilfracombe Express" from Paddington *viâ* Taunton. I know that, because I have travelled by it.

And then, what a pother there was, and how Ilfracombe rejoiced, when two years ago the Barry Railway Company promoted a "Steamboats Bill," which was to add to the usual marine excursion service a "daily boat," running from Barry, near Cardiff! Providence helps those who help themselves, and it must

be confessed that they do not do things by halves at Ilfracombe. Not content with "natural drainage," the town has literally sunk about £30,000 in improving the sewers, and another £50,000 in bringing water from Challacombe. These facts should be proclaimed far and wide, in order that intending visitors may understand that the place is ruining itself for their benefit. No—not that, exactly; I see it is claimed that "Ilfracombe will reap the *full* advantage in days to come." Thus it is, after all, a case of *amour de moi-même, mais bien calculé*. In other words, there is a firm belief, and a well-grounded expectation, that "with the process of the suns" Ilfracombe will become more popular, more cosmopolitan, more gay; its resemblance to London will be more marked and its jollity downright Continental!

To old-fashioned people this mania for commercial progress, this pandemonium of extravagant revelry is anathema; and those who remember their Words-

worth will be heard murmuring to themselves :

“The world is too much with us ; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers :
Little we see in nature that is ours ;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon !
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon ;
The winds that will be howling at all hours
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers ;
For this, for everything we are out of tune ;
It moves us not.—Great God ! I’d rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn ;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn ;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea ;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.”

There is, of course, a large element of prejudice in the apostles of sentiment, some false assumptions, and a dash of cynical inhumanity towards the myriads of city pent, whose normal surroundings impel them, in an all too brief release, to seek noble contrasts in these “coigns of vantage.” Even if it were otherwise, if their notions of enjoyment did not rise above sandwiches and ginger beer, they would not, in that respect, be much behind some of their betters. I remember

travelling in a North Devon coach with two young ladies and a gentleman, all bearing the seal of London Society, and, from the beginning to the end, the sole preoccupation of that squire of dames was the feeding of his fair companions, who, I am bound to add, were heartily of his way of thinking. One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.

Persons of an ultra-refined temperament have mostly abandoned Ilfracombe, and solace themselves by purchasing the water-colour pictures of Naish and Goodwin, which so greatly delighted Academy-goers a few years ago, should any come into the market. Such persons, if advanced in years, are apt to refer to a period preceding the invasion of Goths, Vandals, and Philistines, when the town was a haven of taste and good breeding. When that period can have been in the memory of any one now living I have never been able to make out. The evidence of Mr T. H. Cornish's *Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Principal*

Towns in North Devon certifies us that in 1828 Ilfracombe was already established as the Brighton of the neighbourhood, and, in a passage which might have been written yesterday, he affirms, without the least appearance of regret or misgiving, that a number of steam packets had been plying from Bristol, Swansea and other ports, and that "busy, bustling scenes of arrival and departure had been witnessed with no small gratification by the authorities."

Mr Cornish was the possessor of a florid and grandiloquent style, which his exuberant admiration, optimistic nature, and social enthusiasm called into active play. Thus he remarks with much subtlety and discernment: "Nature has proved a reckless and wayward jade most frequently, as regards her choice of situations as well as persons, where and on whom to leave the astonishing impress of her immortalising hand; but here, in the immediate vicinity of Ilfracombe, she has poured forth her overwhelming charms

with a tremendous and prolific grandeur which we shall not pretend to describe."

For corroboration of this baffling magnificence he turns to Royalty, and from Royalty to aristocratic and military eminence, everywhere approving himself a supple and finished courtier.

"The Duchess of Clarence, on whose exalted and refined taste we feel well assured we can place every reliance, was heard to speak in terms of high gratification in relation to Ilfracombe during her recent visit, and her Royal Highness's suite re-echoed the rapturous words of their condescending patroness with honest fidelity and delight. There has been a 'whisper' going the round of the *first circles*, which could inform us of the intention of the Duke of Wellington—the gallant hero of Waterloo—to visit this delightful watering-place."

Mr Cornish further mentions that "families of distinction" had been in and about Ilfracombe for some months, and although it was then the end of Septem-

ber, appeared loth to go. The same thing is occasionally observed in swallows and other birds of passage, but eventually they do go, and so, no doubt, did their human analogues, and Mr Cornish with them, notwithstanding his kind recommendation of the spot as a winter residence.

If Ilfracombe was ever free from the taint of the tripper, it must have been somewhere about this time, although the allusion to packet-boats necessarily makes one suspicious. As a watering-place it was then in its lusty youth, for our author wondered, when he considered its rare and charming situation, "why it should have remained unappreciated so long." Perhaps, Mr Cornish, your description of Nature as a reckless and wayward jade may suggest the fickle goddess to whom it is more usually applied.

Besides Fortune there is another fickle jade—Taste, to whom the term "Gothic" was formerly a reproach, and who clapped her hands over a green bush tortured into

Alfracombe
The Harbour



16.8.1914

the shape of a peacock. Appreciation of wild scenery came in with the "Lake School." Before that time rocks were "horrid" and "barren," emblems of savagery, haunts of banditti, or, as was the case locally, of godless wreckers. With the spread of civilisation and greater security of travel, the tourist arose, and "pilgrims of nature" followed the lead of poet-interpreters in devotion to the rugged, the majestic, the sublime. Wordsworth himself wrote a *Guide to the Lakes*, wherein he extolled his native mountains as towering above each other, or lifting themselves in ridges like "the waves of a tumultuous sea." So far from needing artificial or adventitious attractions, mountains conferred a special and vivid charm on familiar sounds which even he failed to discover elsewhere. Thus of the melody of the birds he observes: "Their notes, listened to by the side of broad still waters, or heard in unison with the murmuring of mountain brooks, have the compass of their power enlarged ac-

cordingly. There is also an imaginative influence in the voice of the cuckoo when that voice has taken possession of a deep mountain valley very different from anything that can be excited by the same sound in a flat country."

By such passages, and by many a line of pantheistic poetry, Wordsworth and his brother romantics, to whom, as we have seen, the glories of North Devon were not all unknown, created the taste by which Ilfracombe was enjoyed. To the gallant adventure of the knapsack bards, their frank espousal of Nature succeeded, in the next generation, a strain of staid reflexion. The permanence of land and sea, nowhere better exemplified than in the age-long strife betwixt the proud Atlantic and the huge boulders, the fantastic barbicans of this rocky shore, recalled by force of contrast, the pathos of human destiny, the frailty of man, the decay of all his hopes ; and from the inspiration thus given sprang the pensive, almost poignant, lyric of the late laureate :

“ Break, break, break,
On thy cold grey stones, O sea !
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

“ O well for the fisherman’s boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play !
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay !

“ And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill ;
But O for the touch of a vanish’d hand
And the sound of a voice that is still !

“ Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O sea !
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.”

The allusions to the “ fisherman’s boy ” and the “ sailor lad ” remind one that there is an inner, a homelier Ilfracombe, overlaid with the incrustations of fashion, but meet to be revealed in all the lovable simplicity of an old North Devon town. In this capacity it is not Ilfracombe, but, in the phrase of the people, merely ’Combe. It has existed in its own right from Saxon times, when it was known as *Ælfringcombe*, and it may be remarked that its present

name, as pretty and pleasant as can be wished, is the final choice out of a quite marvellous assortment — Ildfordscombe, Alfredscombe, Ilfar Combe, Ilfridcombe, Alfrincombe, Ilfracumbe, Elfordcombe, Ilferdcombe ; and there may be others.

Very little can be made of the early history of the place. Of course there are “notices”—not many ; but the only items of real importance relating to ancient days are the following. Ilfracombe was one of the forty-five ports that sent representatives to the Council of Shipping in 1344 ; and in 1346 it furnished Edward III. with six ships and eighty-two sailors for his memorable expedition against France. Exactly three centuries later the town was captured by Fairfax, and tradition alleges that a hot skirmish occurred in “Bloody Meadow,” at the junction of the East and West Wilder. Cannon balls of the type then in use have been dug up on the spot.

On February 29, 1797, four French vessels, with troops on board, anchored to

the west of the harbour, but, owing to the fact that the place was held by a strong force of North Devon volunteers, there was no attempt to land. That, at least, is one version of the story. According to another, a noted character named Betsy Gammon, who worked in the fields, and was, therefore, generally called "farmer," beat up the drums, and by marshalling the old women along the cliffs in their scarlet cloaks, so alarmed the French that they hastily sailed away across the channel, where, if common report be true, the Welsh women, similarly arrayed, scared them into surrender.

The name of Betsy Gammon is associated with another exploit testifying to unusual nerve or a degree of common sense then seldom met in persons of her station. Legend would have it that a Jew pedlar had been murdered, and that his ghost wandered nightly in the form of a white rabbit on Cairn Top—the fine rugged hill that looks down on the village of Slade. Old Betsy is said to

have picked up his skull and carried it into 'Combe, where she buried it ; and there, I believe, as a white rabbit, it afterwards haunted the churchyard. There was also a Mullacott ghost, who had no head, and one old man has been heard to declare that he had opened the Mullacott Gates to him scores of times. The reality of this apparition is, therefore, beyond the reach of question.

Finally, there were the vicarage children, the ghosts in the room over the kitchen. An inhuman uncle had murdered them for their money, and in the old room, which was the scene of the cruel action, the poor little things used to wander, sighing. Some fifty years ago a young girl, who was entirely ignorant of the tale, chanced to glance into the bedroom, and what should she see but two beautiful children richly dressed standing in the sunlight ? She imagined that they were the children of the house, and, going downstairs, she made some remark about them to the maids, who at once replied,

“There are the young ladies in their brown holland dresses on the lawn.”

“Then who were those pretty dears upstairs?” queried the newcomer. The servants having satisfied her curiosity, the whole party adjourned to the *locus in quo*, hoping to have a peep at the small ghost-maidens. A slanting sunbeam entered the chamber through the window, but by that time the phantom forms had vanished.

“’Tis an ill wind that blows nobody good” is a proverb that specially applies to ’Combe in its old unregenerate days, when a wreck was hailed as a godsend. The commercial gain derivable from such incidents seems to have obliterated all thought of the melancholy and tragic, which, to us, is the sole characteristic of shipwrecks, but the element of comedy, being more akin to the joy of gratified avarice, could not be excluded.

Towards the end of the last century, a Bristol ship with a cargo of slaves (or, as some report, with an African prince and

his attendants on board) came to grief at the Rapparee Cove under Hillsborough. All were drowned—many of them, says tradition, with fetters on their legs. Although it was usual to bestow Christian burial on the wreckers' victims, and a stone was sometimes raised to their memory, the civility was confined to white persons. The negroes, being black and presumably heathen, were denied the privilege, and to this day their skulls are turned up about Hillsborough and the Quay. Thinking little of the carcasses, the people of the town flocked to the beach, and were soon busily engaged in gathering up the bijoux and money washed ashore from the wreck.

It so happened that a woman had been making dough, which she placed in a pan in the kitchen. Sitting by the fire was her son, who, on hearing of the wreck, jumped up with the intention of joining in the treasure-hunt. As he did so, he remembered that he was hungry and had been waiting an unconscionable time for

his meal, so snatching up some of the dough, he stuffed part of it in his mouth and the rest in his pocket, and ran for his life to the beach. Having acquired his share of the spoil, he returned home, and, as he passed along the street, the dough, which had begun to work, raised itself bodily out of his pocket, carrying the dollars with it. Struck by the humour of the thing, the townsfolk speedily christened the young fellow Dollars and Dough, and the nickname stuck to him all the days of his life.

A form of practical joking formerly tolerated at Ilfracombe, and almost canonical, was the ushering in of the great annual fast with Lent-sherd or Dappy-door Night, when bits of crockery were collected and thrown into the houses, and there was universal ringing of bells and knocking with knockers. Occasionally the inmate, thus summoned, on attempting to open the door, had it slammed in his face by concealed jesters, who had fastened a long string to the handle.

Another popular festival was Guy Fawkes Day, when groups of men and boys assembled and chanted a doggerel ode :

“ Plaze to remember the fifth of November,
When gunpowder, trayzon and plot.
I say no raizon why gunpowder traizon
Shood ever bey forgot. Hip, hip, hurrah !
Ladies and gentlemen, sit by the fire,
Put your hands in your pockets, and give what
we desire
Towards the bonfire.
When the ole pope her doth return,
Intu the bonfire her shall burn.
Hip, hip, hurrah ! Gang, gang, hip, hip, hurrah ! ”

Until the year 1828—a curiously significant date (see above)—the clerk used to give out the hymns in the parish church, and there was an imposing array of fifes, bass-viols and so forth. After the erection of the organ, little girls in white tippets and caps occupied the loft, and the adult members of the choir the galleries below. As was the custom in those days in rural places, the congregation faced round at the commencement of the hymn, and remained in that position during the singing.



Ilfracombe
Fore Street

W. H. M. 1891

The Vicar of Ilfracombe from 1836 to 1887—fifty-one years—was a brother-in-law of Kingsley, the Rev. John Mill Chanter, M.A.

The transformation of 'Combe began, as we have seen, about 1820. Before that time the town consisted chiefly of one long street. The pier, which is about 850 feet long, is a monument of the paternal care of the lords of the manor, owing its existence, I believe, originally to the Bouchiers. It was partly rebuilt and lengthened by Sir Bouchier Wrey in 1760, and enlarged and improved by Sir B. P. Wrey in 1829. The harbour, however, is a natural basin, defended from the violence of the sea by the bold mass of rock stretching half-way across the entrance. The cliffs, indeed, compose a semicircle of combined strength and beauty, especially when overspread with their summer foliage. The rise and fall of the tide is between thirty and forty feet, and immediately under the land the water deepens appreciably, but sea-bathing may be enjoyed from the beach and coves

of Crewkherne. The old bathing-place was Wildersmouth.

And now one word in conclusion. The “wild tors,” as they were once, have been accommodated to the easy pace of the sea-side donkey-chaise, that plaintive emblem of sick civilisation; but let no one say that the “Seven Hills,” Hillsborough, the Compass and Capstone and Lantern Rocks have ceased to charm. The accessories may displease, but Ilfracombe itself is, and must ever be, a glory and delight—a diamond of beauty set by the western sea.

CHAPTER III

THE CAPITAL, SOME BOORS, AND A DESERT

THE connecting link between Ilfracombe and Barnstaple, (apart from common membership in the same comprehensive port) is St Nicholas—a very popular saint in the Middle Ages, and by no means forgotten even now. As the patron-saint of children, he lends his name to a well-known transatlantic magazine conducted in the interest of young folk ; and his festival, which falls on December 6, is the occasion of wonderful doings in Germany, where benefactors in bishop's attire dole out gilt nuts, sweetmeats, and similar dainties to the good children, and the bad are reminded of their sins. In England no notice is now taken of the day, but

formerly the revel of the boy-bishop was observed at Eton, Salisbury Cathedral School, and in other seminaries. It may be added that the saint has long been a great favourite in Russia, and it is doubtless for that reason that the present emperor, like his great-grandfather, bears the name of Nicholas.

All this, however, has little or no significance as regards the two North Devon towns, where the cult of St Nicholas is clearly traceable to another circumstance. Not only was he the patron of children (and of spinsters!), but he was the protector also of sailors and travellers. The Providence that watches over "poor Jack" was believed to have delegated his functions to this beatified and most liberal spirit; and in North Devon the devolution was recognised in more ways than one. On the Lantern Rock at Ilfracombe are the modernised remains of his chapel, which was perhaps erected to serve the double purpose of a sanctuary and a lighthouse. Mr Ravenshaw declared in the *Pixie*, a

local magazine of which he and the Rev. George Tugwell were the founders: "It was formerly a great resort of pilgrims, who are said to have flocked to it from all the country round." Mr R. N. Worth, in his *History of Devonshire*, repeats this statement, which is inherently probable, though whether it is based on anything more than tradition or learned conjecture is open to question.

Barnstaple differs from Ilfracombe, *inter alia*, in possessing a rich store of records and muniments, this fact alone being evidence of ancient superiority. Whatever the truth may be as to people going on pilgrimage to the Chapel of St Nicholas on Lantern Rock, certain it is that batches of devout left Barnstaple to visit the shrine of St James at Compostella in Galicia. The first mention of a Barnstaple vessel relates to the year 1434, when the *Nicholas* (Captain Gobbe) was licensed to convey forty pilgrims to that famous resort, whither, according to the legend, the body of St James the Apostle was carried in a

ship without a rudder. Pilgrimaging in mediæval times was a form of globe-trotting not necessarily inspired by religious motives, and Chaucer's Wife of Bath was a regular adept at it.

“ At Rome she had been, and at Boulogne,
In Galice at St James, and at Cologne.
She coudè (*i.e.* knew) much of wand'ring by the way.”

The name of the vessel will be noted as corresponding with that of the chapel on the crag. But that is not the sole coincidence. There was a chapel of St Nicholas at Barnstaple in conjunction with a “ Kay Hall.” The latter, which remained until 1852, is remembered as consisting of two aisles divided by arches of the decorated Norman style, which rested on a massive pier of apparently yet older date. The building stood at the West or Water Gate, and extended over an archway at the entrance of Cross Street.

The position of the chapel on the Strand lends colour to the theory that its erection was associated with the early development of shipping, and the dedication points in

the same direction. Here were the headquarters of an ancient Guild of St Nicholas, which, in the fourteenth century, was a wealthy foundation with a large membership. While there are grounds for supposing that this guild, in its origin, was intended primarily for those who "went down to the sea in ships and did business in the great waters," it was destined to outgrow these limits, and the fraternity, on its emergence to the light of history, is an extensive organisation comprising landowners, inhabitants of other towns, and even women.

The objects of the guild are not particularly clear, but appear to have been religious, commercial, social and benevolent, resembling in the latter respects those of our modern freemasons. The community was in close touch with the "maisters and commonalty," as the municipality was quaintly designated, and most of its aldermen had been mayors of the borough. During the Reformation era, "guilds, free chapels, and fraternities"

were dissolved by Act of Parliament, and in 1584 the Corporation of Barnstaple acquired the site of the late Chapel of St Nicholas and a building called the "Kay Hall" by purchase.

The notice shows that Mr J. R. Chanter was wrong in identifying the "Kay Hall" with the Chapel of St Nicholas. The former in later days, and perhaps always, served as the common market, and here, until its demolition in the middle of the last century, a large stuffed glove remained suspended on a pole during the three days of the annual fair. Attached to the "Kay Hall," besides other apartments, was one traditionally known as the Guard Room—possibly the special charge of the "furch-yngmen," or gallows-committee, of the old guild.

The soft pastoral scenery at Barnstaple is strikingly unlike the rugged grandeur of the coast-line, but has a great charm. The character of the landscape, rich and verdurous and peaceful, is such as might be anticipated at the estuary of a broad



Barnstaple
The Square

H.B. Wimbush

tidal river, and Miss Anne Irwin, in her appreciative verses, has not failed to observe the influence of this noble stream on its surroundings.

“Thou art more fair than people deem,
Bright town beside Taw’s winding stream ;
Seen through this soft autumnal haze
On beauty all around I gaze.

“Away as far as sight can reach
Gleams the broad river’s shining beach,
And sloping to its silver tide
Green banks stretch forth on either side.

“But landward let me gaze, nor miss
One beauty of a scene like this.
See lovely Gorwell’s verdant glade,
And Hawley hid in leafy shade.

“There sunny Upcot greets the sight,
And Codden Hill’s green slopes invite ;
Afar waves Tawstock’s leafy crest,
Here Newport builds her sheltered nest.

“And ‘neath me, with her towered crown,
Spreads out the stately, cheerful town,
Like some fair dame of high degree,
Proud of her genealogy.”

The genealogy of Barnstaple is, in some respects, hard to trace. The erection of the castle has been attributed to King

Athelstan (925–941), who is an important figure in this part of the world. He is said to have had a palace at Umberleigh, and to have founded the priory of Pilton, whose seal, Mr Worth informs us, bore on the reverse the legend, “HOC . ATHELSTANUS . AGO . QUOD . PRÆSENS . SIGNA . IMAGO.” This makes no sense, so probably SIGNA should be emended to SIGNAT, when we arrive at the excellent meaning, “I, Athelstan, do this which the present image (*i.e.* his own figure) stamps.”

But we were speaking of genealogy, and the question at once confronts us, Did Barnstaple beget Pilton or Pilton Barnstaple? Mr W. M. Lethaby, writing in *Devon Notes and Queries* (April 1905), favours the latter theory. “The Bural Hidage account of the Devonshire burhs,” he says, “is of very great interest; it would seem from it that Barnstaple was an offshoot of Pilton, with which it is named.” Barumites and others, anxious to learn more of this incriminating document, may be referred to Dr Maitland’s

volume, *Domesday and Beyond*. West of Exeter there were three "burhs"—Totnes, Lydford, and Barnstaple—all commanding river passages and serving as outposts towards Cornwall. Such strongholds were usually enclosed by earth-banks, as was the case with the early Norman "castles," but the latter had also an earth-mound surmounted by wooden buildings. A mound covered with trees, and commonly known as "The Tower," is to be found in the grounds of Castle House, the North Walk, Barnstaple.

To return to Pilton. Although partly included in the old parliamentary and present municipal borough of Barnstaple, it is a village and parish in itself, being divided from its larger neighbour by the little river Yeo. A river implies a bridge, and Pilton bridge, like Barnstaple bridge, and a bridge at Lee, is connected with the name of "a reverend judge, Sir John le White, vulgarly of his place called Stowford." Stowford is a place in the parish of West Down, and here, about 1270, was

Sir John born. He became successively king's sergeant and "Capital Baron" of the Exchequer, was knighted, and acted as one of the judges itinerant for the county of Kent. He was buried in West Down church, where, in an alcove above his tomb, lies his effigy in wood. The scarlet robes of the judge are still clearly distinguishable. The following story is told of this worshipful person, and is edifying, if not true:—

"Once upon a time, coming from his house in West Down, about some business, to the town of Barnstaple, he found a poor woman and child drowned in this river, from which woeful accident and sorrowful spectacle the good judge, moved with compassion, was inclined to erect a bridge there, for the security of travellers. Accordingly he set about it, and very happily performed it."

In using the term "incriminating" I was influenced by the fact that Pilton, now ranking as a suburb, was at one time Barnstaple's disreputable little sister.



Barnstable
Pilton

H. B. Wintour

This was during the period when the textile industry flourished, and Barnstaple was the chief port in Devon for the importation of wool. Before the Civil War the town boasted twenty baize manufacturers, and when baizes were no more in request, there sprang up a brisk trade with America in coarse serges. In the early seventeenth century—the age of baize—Pilton had an evil name for “shoddy,” and the righteous Westcote levelled at her the reproach: “Woe unto ye, Piltonians, who make cloth without wool!”

Another suburb of Barnstaple which is not in the parish is Newport. This part of the town belongs to Bishop’s Tawton, which was long universally believed to be the see of the first two bishops of Devon. It is not certain even now that this was not the case, but it has to be freely conceded that the claim entirely depends on the accuracy, or otherwise, of John Hoker (or Vowell), of Exeter, uncle of the judicious Hooker. A careful antiquary, whose authority has been repeatedly ad-

mitted by eminent writers with reference to this and other matters, it is possible that he had access to sources of information no longer available, and, in spite of the difficulties insuperable to Dr Oliver, knew what he was talking about. This, at any rate, is what he says :

“ And then Plegmundus, at the command of King Edward, erected three new cathedral churches—one at Wells, one at Bodmin, and one at Tawton—for the county of Devon.

“ Werstanus was the first who fixed the episcopal chair at Tawton, a small village about a mile and a half to the south of Barnstaple, which from thence retaineth the name of Bishop’s Tawton unto this day. At a provincial synod holden in Wessex, anno 905, he was consecrated Bishop of Devon, and had his see at Tawton aforesaid, where, having sat one year, he died, and was buried in his own church there.

“ His successor was Putta, who also resided at Tawton, but as he was on

his journey towards Crediton to pay his obeisance to the king, or, as others say, to visit Uffa, the king's lieutenant there, he was, by some of Uffa's servants, barbarously slain on his way thither. This proved the occasion of removing the episcopal chair from thence unto Crediton.

“The third in order, but the first of this place, was Eadulphus, who was consecrated Bishop of Devon, but installed at Crediton anno 910, where he continued upwards of twenty years.”

Dr Oliver accepts Eadulphus and rejects his alleged predecessors, but he assigns no reasons for this course, although Polydore Vergil, a cautious historian, writing about 1510, when data of all kinds may well have been more plentiful than at present, confirms the holding of a synod by “Pleimundus, Archbusshopp of Canterburie,” and the consecration of many “busshopps.” It is impossible to pursue the subject further, but from what has been stated it will be recognised that Tawton, in an ecclesiastical and episcopal sense, is not so

hopelessly out of the running for the high distinction once unquestioningly accorded it. If the existence of the see cannot be proved, at least it has not been definitely or decisively *disproved*.

There is just one circumstance that may not be adduced as evidence, although at first sight it may seem to have a bearing on the case. If Tawton was not the see of a bishopric, why, it may be asked, should it be called Bishop's Tawton? The answer is simple: it was one of several residences of the bishops, and some sparse remains of their ancient palace are still visible on the south side of the churchyard. This palace had a chapel, for an entry in Bishop Stapeldon's register proves that he admitted eleven candidates to the tonsure there on the twenty-fifth of November 1321. Tawton was, in fact, a manorial appanage of the see of Devon.

Newport — so called in contradistinction to the old port of Barnstaple, with the addition "Episcopi" or "Bishop" as sign of



Bromfield
Bishop's Tower

W. H. H. H.

ownership, or to save confusion—was in early days a chartered borough, and the late Mr J. R. Chanter, a believer in the Bishops of Tawton, conjectured that those prelates, from motives of avarice or vainglory, sought to establish in their district a temporal or municipal jurisdiction in rivalry with the neighbouring borough of Barnstaple! In the reign of Edward III. the place had a mayor, who, I think, must date—as an institution—after the market and the fair, granted in 1294. A town without a market and a fair had no business with a mayor. Indeed, a mayor of Newport was an impertinence at any time, but the formality of election was kept up till the eighteenth century. The Municipal Reform Act abolished the unnecessary and latterly neglected privilege, and Newton “Episcopi” was annexed to the borough of Barnstaple.

Small towns hovering on the outskirts of a more important centre generally regard the prospect of absorption with

the liveliest horror, and put forth frenzied efforts to stave off the inevitable—this not for sentimental reasons, but as the result of a comparative study of the rates, producing the desire to leave well alone. On most other grounds Pilton and Newport are to be felicitated on being taken into a borough with the history of Barnstaple. Well may the inhabitants exclaim: “We are citizens of no mean city!” In former days, however, the people of the place were of a remarkable modesty, otherwise we should never have heard of the “discovery” of the mural painting in St Peter’s tower. As the picture covered a space of sixteen feet by eight or nine, commemorated a grand event—the visit of Henry I. in 1104—and was valuable as an example of mediæval art, nothing but a severely chastened sense of their own worth can explain the indifference of its whilom possessors. Barnstaple then was certainly not

“Like some fair dame of high degree,
Proud of her genealogy.”

However, *Westward Ho!* put the town on its mettle, especially when it was found that Kingsley had glorified Bideford at the expense of its greater neighbour. Mr R. W. Cotton, in a lecture, threw down a courteous challenge, which elicited the following reply:—

“EVERSLEY, *January 7, 1866.*—
I wrote *Westward Ho!* without any access to town records, much more [*sic*] to state papers, chiefly by the light of my dear old Hakluyt. I had always been puzzled by the small mention of Barnstaple in the documents which I knew, and had supposed that it being *the* port of Bideford, vessels were registered as belonging to Barnstaple; while Sir Richard Grenville, who then seems to have had one home at Bideford and another at Tapeley, was lord and master, and took the glory, while he did the work.

“As for my date for the ships being stopped before the coming of the Armada, I think I must have got it from some of the Hakluyt Society’s publications, for I

always tried to be as accurate as possible. But pray convince me of errors as much as you will, as long as you do it in the kindly spirit of your lecture. I have evidently been unjust to Barnstaple simply from ignorance."

This is to plunge the reader *in medias res*, but a brief consideration of the points raised will reveal wherein the injustice lay and serve to disclose the historical foundation of the romance.

In 1587 Sir Walter Raleigh, whose colonising enterprises were attended with many disasters, proposed to despatch an expedition to Virginia in the spring of the following year, for the relief of the English settlers. According to Hakluyt, he

"Forthwith appointed a pinnace to be sent thither with all such necessities as he understood they stood in need of; and also wrote his letters unto them, wherein among other matters he comforted them with promise that with all convenient speed he would prepare a good supply of shipping and men with sufficiency of all

things needful, which he intended, God willing, should be with them the summer following, which pinnacle and fleet were accordingly prepared in the West country at Bideford, under the charge of Sir Richard Greenevil.

“This fleet being now in readiness, only staying but for a fair wind to put to sea, at the same time there was spread throughout all England such report of the wonderful preparation and invincible fleets made by the King of Spain, joined with the power of the Pope, for the invading of England, that most of the ships of war then in a readiness in any haven in England were stayed for service at home.”

Either on this passage or on a reference to it in the Introduction of Sir R. H. Schomburgk's *Discovery of Guiana*, published by the Hakluyt Society in 1848, was founded, in all probability, Kingsley's classic romance. There is complete harmony between them, and *Westward Ho!* is justified of her parentage. The mention of Bideford, not Barnstaple, as the place

where the fleet was equipped doubtless suggested the fiction that the former was "one of the chief ports of England," whereas eight years later it was assessed at only one-fifth as much as Barnstaple, of which port, as Kingsley acknowledges in his letter, Bideford was a member.

With reference to the number of ships in the North Devon squadron, *seven* is a mere fancy figure. At most there were five, and these appear to have been Barnstaple vessels. Three, which are described by Stow as being in the English Channel on May 16, are distinctly assigned to that port:—"From Quinborough toward Plimmouth, the 16 of May, under the L. Admiral of Barstable,

The Galeon Dudley,

The God save her,

The Tyger."

Another Barnstaple ship was the *John*, a privateer manned by a crew of sixty-five, which is mentioned in a state paper dated August 1588. There must have been a fifth, for Wyot's diary records that



between March and August "5 ships went over the bar to join S^r F. D. at plym^o."

The name of the fifth vessel has not been discovered. It may have been the pinnace which Raleigh intended sending to Virginia, and which never sailed, but, more probably, was a larger vessel like the *John*, fitted out by the Norryses, Doddridges, Morcombs, and other merchant venturers of the period. From Wyot's note one would conclude that all five ships sailed in company, but as the *John* and her companion are not named in Stow's list, they probably followed later. The particulars already given render it abundantly evident that Kingsley's date for the departure of the fleet—June 21—is quite unhistorical. This, of course, is assuming that the five vessels which are known to have crossed the bar for the purpose of aiding Drake were the only ships furnished by North Devon, and included the squadron Grenville had got ready for a different object.

Two of them were in the strictest sense Barnstaple vessels ; the other three—*The Galeon Dudley*, *The God save her*, and *The Tyger*—may have been, and probably were, Grenville's. One of the ships which accompanied that hero from Plymouth in an expedition to Virginia, in 1585, was *The Tyger*, of 140 tons ; and *The Galeon Dudley* was perhaps the Spanish prize which he brought back into the port of Barnstaple in December 1586. As Raleigh was courting the favour of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, the vessel may have been renamed thus as a compliment to that nobleman.

It seems rather curious that the duty of national defence should have been left to private persons, but the fact is, Barnstaple and Torrington were called upon by the Privy Council to provide two ships and a pinnace, and cried off. So far from being grateful for the right of reprisal, the mayors and aldermen protested that the "adventures" had been a source of great expense, misfortunes had

been numerous, and, while there might have been individual instances of success, the port and the general body of merchants had incurred heavy losses. Why Torrington should have been included in the demand is not obvious, as it is not a maritime town. Possibly the Lords of the Council had vague notions of geography; or by an act of carelessness they may have substituted Torrington for Bideford, and, when convicted of the blunder, have anticipated Shakespeare by retorting: "What's in a name?"

The shallow philosophy that names do not matter has been confuted at Torrington in memorable style; and in alluding to the subject I shall mention the only circumstances in the history of the town likely to interest outsiders.

Early in the seventeenth century the perpetual curate of the parish, with St Giles, and rector of Little Torrington, was a Mr Samuel Johnson. This clergyman published a volume of *Sermons on the Resurrection*, and it is satisfactory to learn

that he was a man of great piety and ability—qualities not necessarily guaranteed by the experiment referred to. His grandson, Mr Daniel Johnson, a surgeon, wrote a book called *Sketches of Field Sports as followed by the Natives of India*. This was brought out in 1822, and is unique as being the only book ever published at Torrington.

Going back to the eighteenth century we encounter two other Johnsons—a William and a Samuel; the former a relation of the authors, but not himself afflicted, and the latter an author, but not a relation. Mrs William Johnson was a sister of Sir Joshua Reynolds, another of whose sisters married Mr John Palmer. Mr and Mrs Johnson and Mr and Mrs Palmer all resided at Torrington, where they ranked among the principal inhabitants, and, no doubt, their importance was enhanced by the occasional visits of the famous artist. Once he brought with him the unrelated namesake, who was none other than the great lexico-

grapher. Dr Johnson could be a beast when he chose, and, when introduced to the Rev. Mr Wickey, the master of the grammar school, turned his back upon the pedagogue, gruffly remarking that he did not like his name.

Mrs Palmer composed *A Dialect in the Devonshire Dialect, in Four Parts*, which was published first by her grandson, Sir James F. Palmer, in 1837, and secondly, in a more complete form, by her daughter, Mrs Gwatkin, in 1839. It was reprinted by Mr Wood, of Devonport, in 1869. One of the four parts may be cited as a specimen of her talent, and of the North Devon dialect as spoken in her day :

“THE OLD FISH JOUDER.

“ROB. Last hay-harvest at drinking-time, we was all zitting upon the hay-pokes, zinging the ‘Leather Bottle,’ when who shu’d pass by but an old fish jouders with a jackass and panniers. Hogg bawl’d out, ‘Ot fish hath her got—do ye know—can ye tell—will ye ax? Rin, zome-

body, quick!’ Away fagged I: ‘Here, you; you must come back; thicke man,’ pointing to Hogg, ‘lacketh zome vish, but he’s very deeve, and if you don’t bawl en his ear, a’ con’t hear what you zay.’ Back I rind to Hogg: ‘Her is as deeve as a haddock. Do try to make her hear, vor I can’t.’ Away zat he to meet her, and the old trapes took the pipe out o’ her mouth, nusled close up to his ear, and scream’d wi’ all her might, and zo he to her; zo it made ’em both jump.

“BET. It must a-be rare fun.

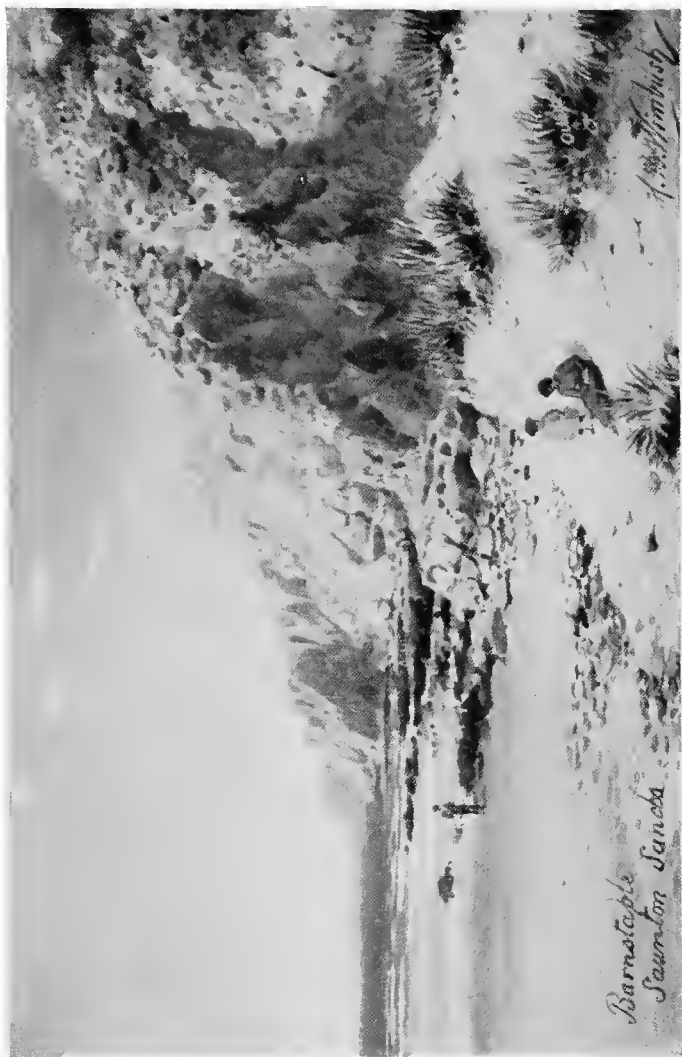
“ROB. ‘Wounds!’ cried Hogg, ‘the old toad hath crack’d the drum o’ my ear, rat her!’—‘A toad?’ a yerr’d to en. ‘I zay *toad* indeed!’ ‘Not zo much like one as thee art!’ ‘Get along,’ zays Hogg, ‘or I’ll gee thee a dowse in the chops.’ Her snatch’d the ass’s halter and away her went maundering—calling us a pack o’ low-lived lubbers vor making game o’ her; vor es all laff’d till es blaked.”

Torrington now spreads its nets for tourists with the offer of free fishing and

free shooting. The latter, I observe, is described as rough but good, and the announcement augurs ill for the grey-coat fraternity evidently doomed to massacre. The place for rabbits is Branton Burrows, where there used to be a terrible placard stuck on the gates—an advertisement of 2000 daily. This looks like business for somebody, and, instead of promiscuous shooting, the bloodthirsty stranger may be reduced to look on and exclaim with the little boys: “Hurn! hurn! Look’ee at the little tail o’ en, how he hoppeth!” The civil suggestion of “another gun,” however, may receive consideration.

What with its yellow sandhills, clumps of grey-green rushes, and dried lakes, Branton Burrows, which lies in quite the opposite direction to Torrington, is a miniature Sahara, and, when August comes, nearly as hot. Civilisation is represented by the lighthouse, and across the river stands Appledore—another reminder that we are in North Devon and not in Hyrcanean or other “vasty

wilds." But it is very likely that we are on Saunton Sands—a continuation of Braunton Burrows reaching to the silver sea. Kingsley was a great lover of the spot. When at Bideford, in the summer of 1871, he marked many changes, but "with a sigh of relief" he found "still unabolished the Torridge, and the Hubbastone, and Instow, and the beloved old Braunton marshes and sandhills."



Barnstable
Sawnton Sands

H. A. Winch

CHAPTER IV

THE LITTLE WHITE TOWN

AT the conclusion of the last chapter reference was made to the alterations Kingsley observed in the aspect of Bideford from the days when he first knew it. Since then there have been further changes. It has cast off, to some extent, its rough, seafaring habits, and “developed,” as it please you, into a residential town, priding itself on its fine supply of water, its good sanitary system, its school of art, and its music. ’Tis as if some pretty hoyden of a fisher maid had been moulded into a statuesque and accomplished young lady. I have known such cases, and been surprised at them.

Pretty Bideford was always, and must

ever be. How pretty it was in Kingsley's prime (and in all essentials it is the same now) he has revealed to us with fulness of affection and rich colouring on the very first page of *Westward Ho!*—"All who have travelled through the delicious scenery of North Devon must needs know the little white town of Bideford, which slopes upwards from its broad tide-river paved with yellow sands, and many-arched old bridge where salmon wait for autumn's floods, toward the pleasant upland on the west. Above the town the hills close in, cushioned with deep oak woods, through which juts here and there a crag of fern-fringed slate; below they lower, and open more and more in softly-rounded knolls and fertile squares of red and green, till they sink into the wide expanse of hazy flats, rich salt-marshes, and rolling sand-hills, where Torridge joins her sister Taw, and both together flow quietly toward the broad surges of the bar and the everlasting thunder of the long Atlantic swell. Pleasantly the old town stands there, beneath its soft Italian sky, fanned

day and night by the fresh ocean breeze, which forbids alike the keen winter frosts and the fierce thunder heats of the midland."

It is an interesting circumstance that these words were actually written in Bideford, and the Royal Hotel, which was opened as such in 1888, contains a handsome apartment that is pointed out as Kingsley's room. It is also known as the Oak Room, the wood used in the lining of the walls and the furniture being of that description. The house was formerly a stately mansion, and though the front has been modernised and there have been sundry additions, the interior remains practically unchanged.

The inception of *Westward Ho!* seems to have been due to the discovery of a quantity of old papers in a secret cupboard behind one of the panels in the Oak Room. Kingsley heard of this discovery, and having obtained permission to inspect the papers, found that they bore upon ancient history. He wanted to borrow

them, but Mr Heard, the grandfather of the present proprietor, would not allow them to be removed. So Kingsley used to repair to the house and write for hours in this room, on one of the walls of which hangs a portrait in oils of John Strange, Mayor of Bideford in 1645-6. This man deserves honour as a martyr to duty, since he died in the latter year of the Spanish plague—a fate he might have avoided but for his heroic acceptance of office when the mayor in being, terrified at the infection, refused to act.

Strange was the grandfather of the Rose of Torridge, his daughter having married John Salterne. This may appear a chronological impossibility, but it must be understood that Kingsley's characters, although assigned by him to the sixteenth century in order to steep them in the romantic glow of that brave, incomparable age, are drawn, some of them, from later periods. John Oxenham, for instance, lived in the second half of the seventeenth century. Mr Stanley Heard is the fortunate

possessor of the *Life of Oxenham*, large portions of which Kingsley copied almost verbatim, and he has also the works relating to Grenville and all the old histories of Bideford which the novelist consulted during his visit.

This was in the summer of 1854, and as his brother-in-law and sister, the Rev. J. M. and Mrs Chanter, were staying at the Barton, Hartland, he spent some days with them, investigating Old Stow, Marsland, and Welcomb. A little cottage in the Marsland valley, which is still standing, figures as the home of Lucy Passmore, white witch and friend of the beautiful Rose. On August 2 Kingsley preached a sermon in Ilfracombe Church, on behalf of the schools, and the greater part of the discourse was devoted to the worthies of Devon. The ruling passion !

The ceiling of the Oak Room, the work of Italian artists some two hundred years ago, has some striking ornamentation. The figures in the centre-piece have been quoted as an intelligent anticipation of

the Darwinian theory, whilst the rest of the moulding, emblematic of the four seasons, is remarkable for the variety of the foliage, no two leaves being exactly alike.

Art has been badly used at Bideford. About the middle of the last century there was fixed in the church, on a bracket in Mrs Buck's pew, the bust of a pretty boy set in oak. When the edifice was restored this bust was carried off, together with other material which the builder deemed useless, and remained for several years in his cellar. On his death it was put up for auction and sold to a tailor called Friendship, who washed the old terra cotta, and placed it in his window, hoping thereby to attract a customer. The figure was so lifelike that a friend of the owner, walking on the other side of the street, said to a companion, "What a pretty boy that is in the window! I didn't know Mr Friendship had one so young."

On further examination the name of



Kingsley's Country
Bideford

H.B. Wintush

Donatello was found painted in clear black letters on the back, and Mr Wallace, of South Kensington, feeling no doubt as to its genuineness, made an offer of £600 for it. This Mr Friendship, who was now fully aroused to its value, refused. The figure was intended to represent John the Baptist, and had camel's hair about it. Mr Friendship acquired also the head of Theobald Grenville, with a bracket beautifully carved in oak, a fine head of Sir Richard Grenville, and several pieces of splendid oak carving, all from Bideford Church. Is it any wonder that the term "restoration," as applied to churches, is a reproach?

History has fared as badly as art; or, if it has fared better, it is not the fault of the Rev. John Whitfield, who held the living from 1741 to 1783, and was Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford. This clergyman was at daggers drawn with the parishioners, and especially the borough officials, whom he maligned in many a sparkling epigram. On one

occasion he was summoned for non-payment of rates, and revenged himself by breaking into the muniment room situated under the chancel, where he threw down a drawer full of deeds before the authorities and ordered them to remove their rubbish, "for," said he, "I will have them no longer in my church."

Apparently he did not mean what he said, for we find that he kept the key, allowed no one to enter, and, as a further mark of contempt, "wilfully and passionately, to the infinite astonishment and scandal of the whole parish," placed on the floor the dead body of a child, which remained there for several months. At last a writ from the King's Bench compelled him to abandon the unseemly contest, the memory of which has been curiously preserved in the motto of a bell. As the parishioners were denied the use of the vestry for parish meetings, they had recourse to the Bridge Hall, and a bell was cast to call them together. Around the upper circle of this bell is an inscrip-

tion, which is a retort in kind on the epigram-loving rector :

“ OUR PARSON’S PRIDE FORMED ME A BELL.
BY THAT I ROSE. BY THAT SATAN FELL.”

In the most literal and offensive sense Whitfield “went the whole hog,” and his abominable conduct resulted in a petition being addressed to the Right Reverend Father in God, Frederick, Lord Bishop of Exeter, which was signed by the Mayor, Aldermen, Deputy Recorder, Capital Burgesses, and principal inhabitants of Bideford. This is a “human document” indeed, and constitutes a most grave historical impeachment of the reverend offender.

The preamble states :

“ That your petitioners had conceived the greatest hopes from the visit with which your lordship lately honoured this town, that they should not be under the disagreeable necessity of giving your lordship any trouble with respect to their rector, Mr Whitfield, but finding that their forbearance to complain, instead of

having the good effect that might be expected from it, hath rather urged him to show still greater resentment to his congregation, which is now become so great an evil that your petitioners, despairing of any alteration without your assistance, have determined to acquaint your lordship that on Sunday last, at the end of the evening service, Mr Whitfield with a loud voice offered up a prayer to Almighty God in these words: ‘God Almighty, deliver me from the scum of mankind, this scoundrel people, Amen!’

“He then rose from his knees, and, going through the aisle, spat at George Buck, Esq., the present mayor, in his seat, in the most indecent and offensive manner possible. Mr William Buck (the mayor’s brother), going out at the little north door, was stared at by Mr Whitfield, who, being asked if he had anything to say to him, replied, ‘No!’ that ‘his family was a pack of scoundrels, rogues and villains,’ and that ‘he was one of them’; and forthwith seized Mr Buck, shook him

by the collar, and kicked him ; and Mr Lake, the town clerk, coming up, Mr Whitfield went to him and gave him a violent blow in the face with his fist. All this caused a very great hurry in the church ; some wept, others fainted, and the whole congregation was put into the utmost confusion and distraction."

With a rector of this lively and irresponsible turn of mind, to whom nothing was sacred—not even the parish registers, nor the sensitive persons of his docile flock—it is almost surprising that Kingsley was destined to set eyes on the simple yet touching entries on which he lavishes one of those delightfully unnecessary digressions always permitted to the large humanity of great and eloquent writers.

" Raleigh a Winganditoian. March 26th."

This from the register of baptisms for 1587–8. A year and a month passed, and the name, otherwise spelt, was inscribed among those of the faithful laid to rest in God's Acre. "And now he is away to happier hunting-grounds, and all that is

left of him below sleeps in the narrow town churchyard, blocked in with dingy houses, whose tenants will never waste a single thought on the Indian's grave." (Winganditoian - Indian: Sir Walter Raleigh, whose name was appropriated by the Redskin, is not known ever to have visited North Devon, although a cousin of Sir Richard Grenville.)

A propos of graves, that most doleful of poets, the Rev. James Hervey, was curate of Bideford in 1738-9, and here the greater part of his *Meditations among the Tombs* was indited. This circumstance I will graciously dismiss as an accident. In writing about places it is very necessary to keep constantly in view the captious and carping critic, who, if informed that my remote kinsman, John Gay, was born at Barnstaple, is forthcoming with the objection: "What if he was? Barnstaple did not inspire him." I grant it, and withal sincerely hope that nothing at Bideford inspired the desponding simile:

“Tired Nature’s sweet restorer, balmy sleep !
He, like the world, his ready visit pays
Where Fortune smiles, the wretched he forsakes.”

But for the arbitrary rules imposed on the small fry of literature, I might have been induced to enlarge on the career of an eminent native, one Doctor Thomas Shebbeare, author of the *Practice of Physic*. This dear good man fell into the clutches of political opponents, and was sentenced to stand in the pillory. Stand in the pillory he did ; but the horrors of the situation were mitigated by the devotion of his servant, who attended him to the spot, and, holding an umbrella over his head, deftly fended off the arguments of rotten eggs—in 1758.

It is rather late to inquire—But what matters or memories may be regarded as essential to, and characteristic of, Bideford as distinct from the nightmares of the contemplative, and the ugly antics of the active divine ? Tristram Risdon, gentleman, who was born at Winscott, in St Giles-in-the-Wood, near Torrington, in

1580, and collected by his travail, and for the love of his country and countrymen, the "Chorographical Description or Survey of the County of Devon," assailed this problem and solved it with much acumen. "For three things this place is remarkable," he says; "first, the arrest for any sum whatsoever sans number; secondly, for the notable bridge which joineth the town divided by the river Torridge; thirdly, for the lords thereof, the Grenvilles, a family that have continued from the Conquest unto this present time, which in all probability is issued out of the Norman house of Clare."

The first allusion is decidedly cryptic. It is evidently a *sly hit* easily understood at the time, but lost upon us were it not for the fuller notice to be found in the pages of Westcote. It seems that an action was entered in the Mayor's Court against one Hawkeridge for £1,000,000, supposed to be the largest amount ever contested in a local court, and certainly

far in excess of the modest maximum of our present county courts. Westcote wisely observes that the consequence of such proceedings must have been the improvement of the defendant's credit, since only a person of extraordinary worth and quality would have been able to pay £1,000,000, the equivalent of a king's ransom. In point of fact, there appears to have been a trifling clerical error consisting in the addition of two ciphers (transferred, no doubt, from the *s.* and *d.* columns); but a saving sense of humour has caused this to be ignored.

As for the bridge, which is the second marvel, Kingsley has sounded its praises in a passage of exalted eloquence :

“Every one who knows Bideford cannot but know Bideford Bridge ; for it is the very omphalos, cynosure, and soul around which the town, as a body, has organised itself; and as Edinburgh is Edinburgh by virtue of its castle; Rome Rome by virtue of its Capitol; Egypt Egypt by virtue of its Pyramids, so is

Bideford Bideford by virtue of its bridge. But all do not know the occult powers which have advanced and animated the said wondrous bridge for now five hundred years, and made it the chief wonder, according to Prince and Fuller, of this fair land of Devon; being first an inspired bridge; a soul-saving bridge; an alms-giving bridge; an educational bridge; a sentient bridge; and, last but not least, a dinner-giving bridge. All do not know, how when it began to be built some half-mile higher up, hands invisible carried the stones down-stream each night to the present site, until Sir Richard Gurney, parson of the parish, going to bed one night in sore perplexity and fear of the evil spirit who seemed so busy in his sheepfold, beheld a vision of an angel, who bade build the bridge where he himself had so kindly transported the materials; for there alone was sure foundations amid the broad sheet of shifting sand. All do not know how Bishop Grandisson of Exeter proclaimed through-



Ferry
Cable

out his diocese indulgences, benedictions, and ‘participation in all spiritual blessings for ever,’ to all who would promote the bridging of that dangerous ford; and so, consulting alike the interests of their souls and bodies, ‘make the best of both worlds.’

“All do not know, nor do I, that ‘though the foundation of the bridge is laid upon wool, yet it shakes at the slightest step of a horse’: or ‘that though it has twenty-three arches, yet one Alford (another Milo) carried on his back, for a wager, four bushels of salt-water measure, all the length thereof,’ or that the bridge is a veritable esquire bearing arms of its own (a ship and a bridge proper on a plain field), and owning lands and tenements in many parishes, with which the said miraculous bridge has, from time to time, founded charities, built schools, waged suits at law, and finally given yearly dinners, and kept for that purpose (luxurious and liquorish bridge that it was) the best-stocked cellar of wine in Devon.”

Now much of this is verily true, but stands in need of commenting—not the least those sentences wherein Kingsley is his own commentator and illustrates what he intends by the phrase “an inspired bridge.” It is doubtful whether he has not “touched up” the legend a little. The original version of the story ascribes the building of the bridge to Sir Theobald Grenville, with the aid of Sir Richard Gornard, or Gurney, a “priest of the place” and “sir” by virtue of his degree as dominus. Gornard was warned in a vision to lay the foundation of the structure where he should find a large stone fixed in the ground. The parson, aware that dreams are, for the most part, lighter than vanity, was at first inclined to pass by the admonition, but next morning he found that a huge boulder had rolled down during the night from the hill-top and lodged itself on the bank of the river. This made him perpend, and, thanks to his efforts, the good folk of Bideford were relieved from the necessity of wading or

ferrying whenever they desired to cross from East-the-water to West-the-water, or *vice versa*.

Sir Theobald Grenville (dead in 1381) is certainly historical—Mr Friendship, as we have seen, bought his *head* (or the simulacrum thereof). Gornard (*alias* Gurney) is a more suspicious character. The Episcopal Registers and other authorities know him not, and the best that can be said for the legend is that a family of the name owned land in the neighbourhood about the time of the Norman Conquest. So, at least, Westcote affirms. A writ of Edward III., dated June 11, 1342, proves that there was then a bridge over the Torridge, with a chapel of St Thomas the Martyr at its eastern end; and we learn from another source that, five years before, the rector of Bideford was Augustine de Bottercombe. These particulars, if not absolutely fatal to the legend, give it a very shaky appearance as subject-matter of *knowledge*. It might savour of hypercriticism to suggest that Kingsley has

confused Bishop Grandisson with his successors, Bishops Stafford and Lacy. One must not be too exacting with reference to old-time bishops, however charitable. Though Protestants are forbidden to pray for them, of each and all may be breathed the pious sentiment :

“Their souls are with the saints, we trust.”

Among the many noble distinctions of Bideford Bridge, it is described as soul-saving. It was so because the rebuilding or repair of the structure was impressed upon people as a religious duty, coupled with contrition, penitence and confession. To such indulgences were granted—not, it is needless to say, that they might afterwards transgress within certain defined limits, otherwise the soul-saving character of the bridge would be gravely jeopardised.

The other gifts and graces enumerated were possible only to a wealthy corporation, and such the bridge has ever been—at any rate, from the time of the earliest account-books now in existence. These

go back to the year 1685, and, with those that follow, exhibit the bridge as a kind of general almoner. To specify a few of its good deeds—it has provided a bell for the Guildhall and the salary of the bellman, the old church burial-ground and public cemetery for the dead, and a bowling-green for the living; it has converted the *Fox and Goose* on the quay into a mansion-house and assembly-room, repaired the church windows, advanced money for the enlargement of the church, entertained a Bishop of Exeter (in 1799), relieved an alderman in great straits with ten guineas, bought a horse for a poor old man whose steed had broken its thigh, speculated in “adventures in wheat,” when the price of corn was so exorbitant as to raise visions of semi-starvation, which adventures invariably resulted in losses, established a soup kitchen, and maintained an almshouse.

Educational the bridge has been also, helping to choose the master and re-erect the walls of the Grammar School, and

founding or subsidising a Commercial, a National and a British School, a Free Library and a School of Science and Art. Incidentally it may be observed that for some reason higher secondary education does not appear to flourish in this part of Devon. The Barnstaple and Bideford grammar schools have never enjoyed a tithe of the celebrity of Blundell's School at Tiverton, whilst the luckless experiment of the college at Westward Ho! has ended in total eclipse, apart from the lurid light thrown upon it by its distinguished product, Mr Rudyard Kipling, in *Stalky and Co.* The publication of that work seems to have precipitated the catastrophe prepared by bad management.

If Mr Kipling has not spared his nursing mother, neither is Kingsley over-indulgent to the old grammar school. And here it should be remarked that the prænomen and character of the master, "Sir" Vindex Brimblecombe, appears to have been suggested by the episode of Vindex in Henry Brooke's *Fool of Quality*,



a novel which Kingsley (like John Wesley) greatly admired, and of which, in 1859, he published an edition in two volumes. With characteristic courage he avows himself in the preface one of the very, very few "who are rash enough to affirm that they have learnt from this book more which is pure, sacred and eternal than from any book published since Spenser's 'Faerie Queene.'" The surname Brimblecombe sounds quite Devonian, and is, in fact, a not unusual cognomen in the county.

To return to the bridge. What Kingsley intended by "sentient" in this contention is debatable, but the structure certainly possessed the prehensile instinct. The opening of Bridgeland Street in the reign of William and Mary, which was at once followed by a glut of leases, fines and heriots, is a case in point. Finally, we are told, it was a dinner-giving bridge. It was much more. There were procession days and feastings galore. Once a year the properties of the trust were

visited and inspected in a sort of “beating of bounds,” when “points”—*i.e.* cords of various materials, principally silk—were given away as the procession passed through the town. “Drums and Musick” were among the charms that soothed the savage breast; also wine, beer, cyder, punch, tobacco, and so forth. After 1758 the dinners were held in the tapestried room of the Bridge Hall, on St Thomas’s Day, but financial reformers—hateful race!—voted them a waste, and, after spasmodic revivals, the custom surceased in 1809.

Tobacco—Bridgeland Street! These echoes remind us of another claim which, if it could only be substantiated, would invest Bideford with a fourth cardinal distinction. “Not to South Devon, but to North; not to Sir Walter Raleigh, but to Sir Amyas Leigh; not to the banks of Dart, but to the banks of Torridge, does Europe owe the day-spring of the latter age, that age of smoke which shall endure and thrive when the age of brass shall

have vanished like those of iron and of gold; for whereas Mr Lane is said to have brought home that divine weed (as Spenser well names it) from Virginia, in the year 1584, it is hereby indisputable that full four years earlier by the Bridge of Putford, in the Torridge moors (which all true smokers shall hereafter visit as a hallowed spot and point of pilgrimage), first twinkled that fiery beacon and beneficent lodestar of Bidefordian commerce, to spread hereafter from port to port and peak to peak, like the watch-fires which proclaimed the coming of the Armada or the fall of Troy, even to the shores of the Bosphorus, the peaks of the Caucasus, and the farthest isles of the Malayan sea; while Bideford, metropolis of tobacco, saw her Pool choked with Virginian traders, and the pavement of her Bridgeland Street groaning beneath the savoury bales of roll Trinadado, leaf and pudding; and her grave burghers, bolstered and blocked out of their own houses by the scarce less savoury stock-fish casks which filled cellar,

parlour and attic, were fain to sit outside the door, a silver pipe in every strong right hand. . . .”

Oh, the pleasing hardships of sudden proud prosperity!—and the infinite flamboyant tow of resourceful conjurers and romancers! But it is not all conjuring and romance. There is no doubt that at the first, and for very many years subsequently, the importation of tobacco was a speciality of North Devon, and the only question is whether, here as elsewhere, Kingsley is not purloining from Barnstaple for the aggrandisement of Bideford. The earliest customs returns of the Port of Barnstaple date from 1727. In that year the duty produced £26,244, 5s. 2d., and in the following year £28,525, 12s. 11d. The making of pipes (clay, not silver) was once a profitable industry at Barnstaple, and the primitive form of the letters stamped on the spurs of some—B A on the top and R V M beneath—has invited the conjecture that those particular pipes may be Elizabethan.

Most of them, however, may be confidently assigned to the seventeenth century.

“Endless genealogies minister questions,” and the history of the Grenvilles (or Granvilles) supplies copious illustrations of the fact. Risdon’s statement (see above) that it “in all probability is issued out of the Norman house of Clare” is an unfortunate guess, he having been beguiled by a false scent—the connection of both houses with Gloucester. To disprove his assertion formally, however, or trace the descent of the great West country family in all its branches, is not for us—heart and flesh would cry out at so stubborn a page of heraldry. Suffice it to single out certain features of interest.

The stock has its root in Rollo, the famous Jarl, whom they named the Ganger, because he was compelled to walk, no horse being strong enough to support his vast bulk. His lineage intermarried with the Royal house of France,

and furnished ancestors to the Conqueror, who was therefore allied to the early Granvilles. The fact was acknowledged in the patent of nobility conferred on Sir John Granville in 1661 : “ He justly claims his descent from the younger son of the Duke of Normandy, as we ourself from the elder.”

The family derives its name from the town of Granville in Normandy, and when the place was bombarded by the English, George Granville, the poet, addressed the following lines to his kinsman, Charles, second Lord Lansdowne :—

“ Those arms which for nine centuries had brav’d
The wrath of time, on antick stone engrav’d,
Now torn by mortars, stand yet undefac’d
On nobler trophies, by thy valour rais’d.”

When Dennis Granville, Dean of Durham, was deprived in 1691, he retired to the town of his name and ancestry, and, dying, was buried there. Thus it may truly be said of the family that they have “ looked unto the rock whence they were hewn and the hole of

the pit whence they were digged." All the same, they have been good Englishmen.

A question that would formerly have engendered much feeling in the West concerns the respective shares of Devon and Cornwall in the glory of the heroic Sir Richard Grenville, of the *Revenge*. Prince informs us, in his *Worthies of Devon*, that it was at Stowe, in the Cornish parish of Kilkhampton, that "this family have had their chiefest habitation for many generations. But," he adds, "the first residence thereof, Dugdale and others tell us, was at Bideford aforesaid. However, it may not be questioned that alternately they inhabited at both—sometimes at one and sometimes at the other—as they were disposed." Sir John Grenville, his grandfather, entailed on Sir Richard "his mansion-place in the town of Bideford and the residue of the town and borough of Bideford in the county of Devon," so that there is no mistaking the reality and intimacy of the tie.

Where was the mansion-place? Unfortunately this is a mystery. Prebendary Granville, who has written an able and comprehensive history of his family, made the fullest possible research, but was unable to fix the residence of the great Sir Richard. He inclines to the opinion that Ford Farmhouse, a very ancient building opposite the ford over the Torridge, was the home of the hero when he was at Bideford. Probably he was not often there, although he was elected one of the first members of the corporation when the town received its charter from Queen Elizabeth. It is a singular circumstance that Richard is mentioned in the State papers as being at hundreds of places, but never once in connection with Bideford. There is, indeed, something distinctly cosmopolitan in his character and achievements. He was "a first-rate fighting man," and at sixteen was present at the naval Armageddon of Lepanto, which broke the power of the Turks. After that he treated the Western Main as

“just his own backyard” and the haughty Spaniards as a race of inferiors. This spirit of splendid defiance eventually cost him his life in a battle at long odds, which Tennyson has sung in soul-stirring immortal strains. Of course, there were croakers; “headstrong,” “rash,” “wilful,” were the terms flung at him. When will England be free from this pest?

It was doubtless the greatest disappointment Grenville ever suffered that he was not allowed to take part in the “beating and shuffling together” of the so-called Invincible Armada. Hakluyt expressly states that he was “personally commanded not to depart out of Cornwall.” But the *Revenge* shared in the engagement, and Drake chose her as Vice-Admiral. The vessel was described by Sir Richard Hawkins as “ever the unfortunatest ship the late Queen’s Majesty had during her reign,” and, after her capture by the Spaniards, foundered with fifteen hundred men. The misfortune that dogged the *Revenge* over-

whelmed her captain. But Sir Richard had already experienced vicissitudes—some quite early. When he was but an infant, his father, Sir Roger, an esquire of the body of Henry VIII., was drowned in the *Marie Rose*, and as Sir Richard was buried at sea, there is that measure of melancholy coincidence.

Grenville's widow survived him thirty-two years, and was buried in Bideford Church, November 5, 1623. She was Mary, daughter and co-heir of Sir John St Leger, of Annery—a fine old mansion at Monkleigh, long the seat of the Hankford family. Sir William Hankford, who died at Annery in 1422, is said to have been the Lord Chief-Justice who committed Prince Hal to the Tower for striking him on the bench.

Tradition represents Sir William's death as a tragedy. He had become afflicted with incurable melancholy, either on account of the unsettled state of public affairs or from a fear that he had given mortal offence to the Prince by his strong

action in placing him under arrest. So he committed suicide in a most ingenious way. Sending for his keeper at Annery, he told him that he had neglected his preserves, and instructed him to shoot without mercy the first person he discovered in the deer-park who refused to stand and render an account of himself. Then on a dark and stormy night he sallied forth, and, throwing himself in the keeper's way, returned no answer to his repeated challenges. At length the servant raised his gun and fired. The supposed poacher fell dead, and the keeper, on examining the body, found to his horror that he had shot his master. For generations the stump of an old oak at Annery used to be shown as the scene of the occurrence. The truth of the story, however, may not be taken for granted, since Prince raises the grave objection that the worthy judge lived happily and honourably throughout the reigns of Henry V. and Henry VI.

Kingsley's story has brought into being

an entirely new place named after it—
Westward Ho! Two miles from Bideford, and another two miles from the fishing village of Appledore, it stands almost on the Northam Burrows, and close to the vast pebble-ridge of bluestone boulders where Amyas Leigh used to sit and drink in the fascination of Old Ocean. Westward Ho! is celebrated for its golf-links, and there is at least one person in the world—a fine specimen of an elderly, educated athlete—so enamoured of the game, that on his own confession he values the spot for nought else. Everyone to his liking. Lovers of Kingsley, who rejoiced at the non-abolition of the Hubbastone, will not forget the charmed rock, “where, seven hundred years ago, the Norse rovers landed to lay siege to Kenwith Castle, a mile away on the left hand; and not three fields away are the old stones of the ‘Bloody Corner,’ where the retreating Danes, cut off from their ships, made their last fruitless stand against the Saxon Sheriff of Devon.



Within that charmed rock, so Torridge boatmen tell, sleeps now the old Norse Viking in his leaden coffin, with all his fairy treasure and his crown of gold."

Unfortunately Hubba's cairn disappeared many years ago—destroyed by an encroachment of the sea, some say, but more probably by the hand of some despoiler. Its position on the shore can be fixed by the presence of the Hubba-stone Quarry. Almost all traces of Kenwith Castle have also vanished.

The ravages of Hubba are enshrined in two pretty Norse legends. One is, that Lodbrog of the Hairy Breeches was out with his hawk catching wild-fowl, when his boat was blown to sea, and he landed in Norfolk. Edmund, King of the East Angles, adopted him, and Lodbrog became a famous sportsman, so much so that he attracted the hatred of Bjorn, the king's huntsman, who murdered him. As a punishment, Bjorn was placed in Lodbrog's boat without sail or oar, and sent adrift. He was carried to Denmark,

where he told Lodbrog's sons, Hubba and Hingvar—that their father had been put to death by Edmund. So they gathered an army and ravaged East Anglia. (Another story is that Lodbrog was thrown into a dungeon full of serpents by Alla, King of Northumberland.) Then came the vengeance of Hubba and Hingvar, Edmund being tied to a tree and shot at till the Danes were weary. The wonderful Raven banner, woven to prefigure the revenge and lost at Appledore, was the work of Lodbrog's daughters.

Proud and grateful Bideford is now the possessor of a full-length statue of the man who accomplished so much for her welfare. The sculptor was Mr Joseph Whitehead, and the monument was unveiled on February 7, 1906, by Lord Clinton. The statue, which stands at the entrance of the public park, facing the quay, represents Kingsley in his robes, holding a pen in one hand and a closed book in the other, whilst the head is

slightly inclined forward. The work has been approved by the canon's daughters as an excellent likeness, and, since there can be no question of its *raison d'être*, the pedestal bears on the front, as the only inscription, the name "KINGSLEY."

CHAPTER V

CLOVELLY AND HER NEIGHBOURS

WEST of Bideford, Clovelly is no doubt the centre of interest, but the charms of that delicious spot must not lead to the neglect of other places which have substantial, if smaller, claims on our attention. For instance, the rival of Clovelly Court—Portledge, in Alwington parish. This is the ancestral home of the Coffins, where, says Kingsley, they “had lived ever since Noah’s flood” ; and he adds that the family was as proud of its antiquity as any nobleman in Devon, and might have made a fourth to that famous trio of Devonshire C’s, of which it is written :

“Crocker, Cruwys, and Coplestone,
When the Conqueror came, were all at home.”

Clareilly



This being so, it may well seem unfortunate that they could not discover a less funereal name wherewith to denote their long and honourable pedigree. By a process of hyphening it has become specialised into Pine-Coffin, which intimates a sad lack of humour.

It is not a little remarkable that the most eminent member of the family, Sir William Coffin, Master of the Horse in the reign of Henry VIII., is remembered in connection with a burial scandal. One day he was passing Bidford Church, and seeing a crowd, naturally enough enquired the reason. He was told that the rector refused to bury a corpse, borne thither for interment, until the mortuary he demanded had been duly paid, albeit the mourners, if they were to satisfy the hard-hearted parson, would be forced to part with their uttermost farthing.

Great was Sir William's indignation when he heard this, and turning to the sexton and others, he exclaimed in an

angry tone, "Seize him and bury him instead!" The bystanders proceeded to obey, and would assuredly have finished the business, but, in the nick of time, the obstinate rector gave in. Perspiring with terror, and covered with confusion, he was haled out of the mouth of the pit, and lost no time in performing the required rites.

To turn from burials to weddings would be usually to pass from grave to gay, but the traditions of the neighbourhood reveal to us how nearly Hamlet's saying may be reversed, and the marriage-baked cakes furnish forth the funeral tables. About half-way between Bideford and Clovelly, and rather more than half a mile from Horn Cross, a small hamlet on the high-road between those two famous places, is a precipitous cliff, marked on the last ordnance survey map "Giffard's Jump." The spot has acquired its name from the fact (or fiction) that a member of that ancient family overbalanced himself and fell to the craggy bottom without sustain-

ing much injury. The accident is said to have occurred on his wedding day, and to have been caused by a successful effort to preserve his imprudent bride from the same untoward fate. The story is told at some length in a ballad entitled *Giffard's Leap*, which was composed by Sir A. Hardinge Giffard (whose father was a nephew of Roger Giffard, the last of the name who owned and resided at Halsbury) about the year 1791, and commences in true ballad style, as follows :—

“ In the dark woods of UMBERLEIGH
Lord Arthur leads his quiet life,
Amongst his daughter's children, free
From courtly cares and courtly life.

“ No other wish has he, and yet
Oft might a thought of lofty things
Visit the last Plantagenet,
Sprung from a race of mighty kings.”

The poem goes on to narrate the sorrows of Lord Arthur's lovely daughter, who “in opening youth” gives her hand to Basset's heir, and soon after loses him by death. Then follows the incident which titles the composition :—

- “ But the young heir of Halsbury
Tells his soft wish and wins her heart ;
A bold and graceful youth is he,
And formed to play the lover's part.
- “ And Parkham's bells have told the tale,
And lovely Margaret is his bride,
And every village in the vale
Has to that joyful sound replied.
- “ ‘ Come forth, my love,’ the bridegroom said,
‘ Come look upon the Severn Sea ;
Yon cliff that proudly lifts his head
Shall be a seat for you and me.’
- “ In sportive mood the cliff they gain'd,
The raptured pair the waters view'd ;
And o'er the edge their sight they strain'd,
To mark the wild waves fierce and rude.
- “ And still to trace the rocky beach,
Mocking her husband's anxious eye ;
The giddy Margaret forth would stretch,
And still another look would try.
- “ Refrain, my dearest love, refrain,
Nor, wisely, tempt this dreadful height ;
While o'er the giddy brink you strain,
The shock may blind your dazzled sight.
- “ Her footing fails—his powerful hand
Saves her—but for a sight of woe.
He sees her just securely stand,
And he himself is hurl'd below.”

Of course she imagines she has lost *him* too, and is borne home, prostrate with grief and remorse. However, as has been said, he by a miracle escapes.

Sir Hardinge tells the story very deftly and sympathetically, and the legend has probably some basis in fact. But the man who married the daughter of Lord Arthur Plantagenet and widow of John Basset was Thomas Monk, a son of Anthony Monk, of Potheridge; and the lady who married Thomas Giffard of Halsbury was Margaret Monk, sister of Thomas Monk. Exactly six months after her first husband was buried she was married at Parkham Church to William Davyll (or Daviles) of Little Marland, a widower, by whom she had four children. The famous George Monk, Duke of Albemarle, was a great-grandson of her brother.

Many elements of the tradition, it will be noticed, are found in these prosaic details, but differently assorted. Strict accuracy is hardly to be expected in a tale handed down orally from generation to

generation, and, assuming the main circumstance to be true, it is interesting to observe how the accessories have been altered and distorted in the crucible of human memory. Thomas Giffard and Margaret Monk were married on October 28, 1538. Halsbury is only three miles from Giffard's Jump, and Parkham Church is even nearer. As the "honeymoon" is a modern invention, the accident, if it ever occurred, doubtless took place during a sort of picnic attended by the bridal party.

Clovelly, sweet Clovelly, is a synonym for quaint, old-world beauty, which, like that of Paradise itself, is inexpressible. Even Kingsley, though so great a master of word-painting, acknowledged himself beaten in attempting to depict the glories of this sea-kist Elysium, though he does his noble best. Of the Hobby Drive, which skirts the cliff line for three miles, and makes by far the most striking approach to the village, he writes: "Its very contrast makes the place unique. One is



accustomed to connect with the notion of the sea bare cliffs, breezy downs, stunted shrubs struggling for existence; and instead of them, behold a forest-wall, five hundred feet high, of almost semi-tropic luxuriance. It looked but a step out of the leafy covert into blank infinity. And then as the road wound round some point, one's eye could fall down, down through the abyss of perpendicular wood, tree below tree clinging to and clothing the cliff, or rather no cliff, but perpendicular sheet of deep wood sedge and enormous crown ferns, spreading their circular fans; but there is no describing them or painting them either."

As for the village, there is but one street, leading steeply up from the antique pier and landing ladders, by a series of steps or terraces formed of small boulders, to the crown of the hill, and lined by primitive-looking cottages, of irregular construction, covered with fuchsias and wistaria and *ampelopsis veitchii*.

Nestling in the cleft of a rock, Clovelly

is said to take its name from this circumstance. Mr Worth holds that it is merely a disguise for "clove-lea," not *clausa vallis*, as the learned Latinist has mooted. I agree with Mr Worth, only it seems to me he leaves one syllable unaccounted for. I believe there is a "hill" in it. "Clove-hill-lea" would contract into "Clovelly" more naturally than "Clove-lea," which is short and sweet enough already. The cleaving agency is, of course, the brawling stream that falls in a deep, narrow channel from the height to the cobbly shore.

As we are on the subject of etymology, it may be as well to add something with regard to the "Hobby" Drive. No doubt most people, especially those acquainted with the hobby-horse celebrations loved of the sailor-folk of Combmartin and Minehead, readily associate the name with a similar performance at Clovelly, or, at all events, with the presence of the genus horse. Nor will I undertake to affirm that they are wrong. But there is another

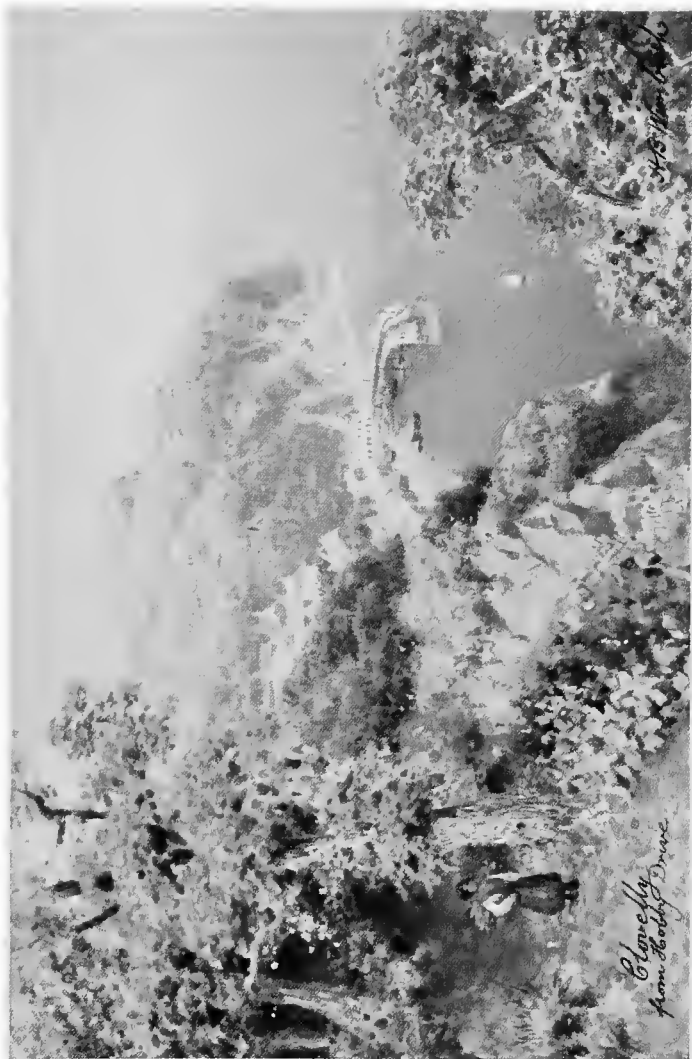
explanation, which is more poetical if not also more probable. A glance at the dictionary will show that one meaning of "hobby" is "a small species of falcon." The bird, which is found on this coast and at Lundy, was trained to fly at pigeons and partridges, and its distinguishing marks are two yellow feathers at the back of the neck, their legs and feet being likewise of this colour. Yet another, and very tempting, derivation is *haut bois*, which reminds one of Kingsley's "forest wall," and may go back to Norman times.

Norman is the tower of All Saints' Church; the font is Norman, and Norman is the chevron moulding of the porch, but the general features of the building are Perpendicular. The interior has many striking monuments—one to the memory of William Cary, who "served his king and country in ye office of justice of the peace under three princes, Queen Elizabeth, King James, and King Charles I."; and another to Sir Robert Cary, "who

served faithfully that glorious prince, Charles I., in the long civil war against his rebellious subjects."

The manor was sold to Sir John Cary, knight, in the reign of Richard II., and it was by his family that the small harbour and pier were constructed. In 1730 the property passed to Zachary Hamlyn, whose great-nephew was created a baronet ; and the present lady of the manor, Mrs Hamlyn, is a descendant. Clovelly Court, erected in 1680, was destroyed by fire about a century later, and very few traces of the Cary mansion have been preserved in its successor. Thus, in a double sense, the old order changeth, yielding place to new. The Carys are gone, and also their house.

Among the memorials in Clovelly Church is one bearing the inscription : "June 12th, 1819—January 23rd, 1875. In memory of Charles Kingsley, Rector of Eversley, Canon of Westminster, Poet, Preacher, Novelist, son of Charles Kingsley, sometime Rector of this church, and of



415 New York

Claretha
from Betty Drive

Mary Lucas, his wife.” The novelist was born at Holne, in a house which stood where the present vicarage stands—on the edge of a wooded ravine, in the valley of the Dart. Soon after, his father accepted the living of Clovelly and removed thither with his family. Charles Kingsley was Devonshire born and Devonshire bred, but he did not come of a Devonshire stock. He was descended from an ancient Cheshire family—the Kingsleys of Kingsley, in the forest of Delamere. However, his early connections were nearly all with the West country. He was a pupil of the Rev. Derwent Coleridge (son of S. T. C.) at Helston Grammar School, and of the Rev. Thomas Drosier of Colebrooke, near Crediton, where an old woman testified that he and his brother Henry “were two of the blesseddest boys that ever was,” meaning that they were up to all kinds of mischief. It seems to have been much the same at Clovelly, where Miss Kingsley—she was an only sister—had a class of girls, and Charles used to break in upon

them and make them laugh with his quaint sayings. The rector and his children were thoroughly at home in the saddle, and used to make long expeditions on horseback, to Trentishoe and Lynton, or across Woolacombe Sands to Croyde, often on botanising errands.

The Kingsleys left Clovelly in 1830, but Charles never forgot or ceased to love the splendid scenes of his boyhood. As a man he realised in a large measure the portrait of a perfect naturalist in his own *Glaucus*. He was "strong in body, able to haul a dredge, climb a rock, turn a boulder, walk all day, uncertain where he should eat or rest." He was "gentle and courteous, brave, enterprising, and of a reverent turn of mind." His youngest daughter — "Lucas Malet" — married the Rev. William Harrison, formerly Rector of Clovelly.

With all his superb gifts Kingsley ("even as you and I") had his limitations. He was not sound in his history, where he intended and strove to be sound; and

of archæology he made a terrible hash, describing Clovelly Dikes as a “huge old Roman encampment.” Whether the vicinity of this old British camp had any influence on the nomenclature of the district is hard to say, but we meet with Gallant Rock and Gallantry Bower. There is a vague tradition that a love-sick lady of Clovelly Court was immured for safety in the Bower, and, breaking loose, threw herself over the cliff, which is nearly four hundred feet high, and the most perpendicular in Devon.

It is not surprising that the surpassing loveliness of the spot has tempted admiration to pay tribute in verse; and, as a poetical bid at its unconquerable charms, the following sonnet (by “G. A.”) has much to commend it:—

“Of lovely combes that gem Devon’s shore
Let all her glad and garrulous streamlets tell,
As sweet-lipt o’er the sands they bid farewell.
Not such thy site, Clovelly—thou dost soar
Above the cloven cliff; the surge’s roar
Booms at thy feet, and thy sea-toilers dwell,
Breasting the fitful moods they know so well,

Of passionate winds and seas. Flower-clustered o'er,
From wooded summit to the pebbled beach,
 Bathed in this summer sunlight thou art gay ;
 The air is laden with the jasmine's breath,
And pulsing with the sound of cheerful speech :
 Alas, that sorrow should e'er climb that way
 From bounteous seas that take their toll in death !”

The last line reminds us of the sad tragedies of this dangerous coast, of which Kingsley has limned some affecting pictures in his *Prose Idylls*. Take, for instance, the washing ashore of an innocent “just as he had been lashed to the rigging by loving and dying hands, but cold and stiff, the little soul beaten out of him by the cruel waves before it had time to show what growth there might have been in it”—a passage that at once recalls Longfellow's description—perhaps only a coincidence :

“ At day-break, on the bleak sea-beach
 A fisherman stood aghast,
 To see the form of a maiden fair
 Lashed close to a drifting mast.”

As a boy Kingsley had seen corpses
“ lie out on the shining sands,” he had



*Clouet's
Gallant Rock*

H.B. Wintch

seen a herring fleet wrecked, and in the light of such painful experiences he learnt to write that most sorrowful lyric, "The Three Fishers." It is said that, on hearing the great contralto, Antoinette Sterling, sing this beautiful dirge, the poet burst into tears. The fishermen, on the other hand, have in times past shown grievous callousness in the matter of human flotsam and jetsam. If the body of a sailor was washed ashore, it was the custom to put it back again so that it might be carried on to the next parish, which would have to support the cost of burial. If the body showed signs of life, it was put back just the same, as this was regarded as an evil omen! To prevent such inhumanity, R. S. Hawker used to offer half a sovereign for every supposed corpse that came ashore.

Other superstitions abound. Once upon a time there lived at Peppercombe an old woman who was reputed to be a witch and said to haunt the cliffs in the form of a hare. Many a pot-shot had been taken

at her, but without effect. At length one of the Coffins of Portledge was out that way with a friend, and seeing a hare double, exclaimed, "There goes old Betty Trembelow." His companion put a bent sixpence in his gun and fired. The shot told, and a few minutes later the body of the witch was discovered at the foot of the cliff, with the breast all torn and bleeding. At the same moment three gulls rose into the air, and one of them was believed to represent the soul of old Betty, thus removed from the scene of her impious practices.

When Kingsley wrote of "the bar and its moaning," he was doubtless thinking of the Bideford bar, which can only be crossed at certain states of the tide, and of which the fishermen, both within and without, have a great dread. One result is that the Appledore and Instow men bestow much of their attention on salmon fishing, and they might do worse. According to Dr Peard, the Taw alone, with its tributaries, is capable of producing

between sixty and seventy tons of salmon during the season. This would represent a money value of £6900, but no doubt the estimate is far too liberal.

As regards outsiders, it is safe to assert that no Clovelly man (for example) dreams of entering the mouth of the river unless he is in want of a new boat, for which he has to pay a visit to Appledore. The cost of a boat is at the rate of £1 per foot; thus a boat 15 feet in length will come to £15. This sum, however, only refers to the hull; the sails are found by the purchaser. The keel is made of elm, as less likely to split; and the Bucks and Clovelly men shoe their boats with iron on account of the roughness of the beach. The Bucks men, by the way, are very daring. They will enter the narrow gut, which looks *very* narrow from the sea, without fear on the darkest night. The Clovelly men have nets about half a mile long and drift down the channel with them as far as Hartland, where they haul in. The length of the nets is in proportion to

the size of the boats. Some of the herring-boats are twenty feet long.

Great jealousy exists between the fishermen of the various small villages—Clovelly, Peppercombe, Bucks Mills, Appledore, etc.; and, when they encounter at sea, they will bandy compliments after this fashion: “Hullo, you Bucks nanny-goats, what sort of catch have you made?” The Bucks men will thereupon respond by dubbing their rivals “Clovelly row-dogs,” or “Peppercombe brags,” as the case may be.

Besides the fishermen, there is a class of tradesmen called “jowders,” who sometimes contract for the total catches of particular “captains”—all boat-owners are so named—but more usually purchase the herrings at so much per maize. A maize consists of 620 fish, the odd score being accounted for by the fact that in counting, three extra herrings are thrown in on reaching each hundred, at the cry of “Tally!” and two more at the finish. For a maize six shillings may perhaps be

paid, but that depends. If fish are plentiful the price may drop to half-a-crown ; and, as is the way with business, a "slump" may be caused by a "bolt from the blue."

On one occasion there was a wreck. A passenger steamer, the *Castleton*, had got out of her course and could not steam against the tide. A friend of mine, in company with an old salt, watched her as she bumped on the rocks. It was impossible to render any help, and eventually she foundered and two or three hundred passengers were drowned. This catastrophe excited a prejudice against herrings. The "jowders," or itinerant hawkers, could not sell them, and even the people on the spot would not eat them. Dead bodies were being continually cast up, and it was thought that the fish fed upon them.

Like Yarmouth on the East coast, Clovelly has long enjoyed a reputation for the best herrings. Why? Apparently the only reason that can be assigned is that the fish, on reaching these places, are in their highest state of perfection.

To this we may add that, compared with some of their neighbours, the fishermen have a superior chance of securing good hauls from the fact that they are on the spot, and are not troubled with the bar.

Within easy reach of Clovelly—four miles—is Hartland, or “Harty” Point. The cape, which is the boundary of the old Severn Sea, has been identified by persons of credit with Ptolemy’s Promontory of Hercules. Assuming their account to be correct, it is not really necessary to go in search of any further reason for this description than the character of the place—a ridge of scarped cliff rising three hundred feet above the level of the sea. Such a spectacle, combined with the vision of the rude and boundless Atlantic, may naturally have impressed some ancient voyager and induced him to forage for a name in classic myth. Some antiquaries, however, maintain that after slaying Albion, Neptune’s son, in Gaul, Hercules crossed over to Britain in his golden bowl, while others contend



*Glovelly
Rose Cottage*

that the champion's name is a free translation of Baal or Melkarth, a favourite divinity of the Phœnicians. It has also been gallantly attempted to bring King Arthur on the scene.

These, and similar, speculations are too profound, too hazardous for a simple work like the present, but inasmuch as there seems to be something of megalomania in the air, one must on no account neglect the grandiose forms of Napoleon and his Satanic Majesty. Two figures, designed to represent those twin potentates, were set up on Hartland Point, when the public rejoiced at the incarceration of the former in Elba, and there they remained till a frightful storm hurled Bonaparte's effigy into the sea. Singularly enough this happened about the very time that the real, fleshly Napoleon made good his escape from his island prison, and the elders of Hartland, sorely exercised by the coincidence, shook their heads mysteriously and predicted worse woes to come. It may be added that the image of the

Devil was conveyed to the church, and kept for many years in "Pope's Chamber."

Three qualifications, at least, make Hartland a noted place. First, it has an—or part of an—Abbey, which to-day is a private residence, and, as such, not particularly ancient. Truth to tell, it was nearly all rebuilt about 1780, by Mr Paul Orchard, and, in this renovated state, shows hardly more of the old friary than the desecrated materials. It is commonly stated that the cloisters now form the basement storeys of the east and west fronts, but, in point of fact, the north wing, the dining-hall and the cloisters were all pulled down at the date in question, and grave doubts are entertained whether many of the original arches remain. As for the shafts, they have been authoritatively pronounced "poor imitations." The Rev. James Hervey, who soliloquised among the tombs, arrived soon enough to see what was left of the building before the improvements were begun, and speaks of its "antique,

grave and solemn aspect," very congenial, no doubt, to his morbid temperament. The old belfry-tower was then standing at the north-east corner, and was so strongly built as to prove a hard nut for the demolishers, who were obliged to undermine it and bury it whole in a trench dug for the purpose.

Over one of the arches in the present building is the fragment of a Latin inscription, which tells us that the cloisters were constructed of coloured marble at the commencement of the fourteenth century. This would point to some amount of magnificence; on the other hand, Bishop Stapledon, in 1319, reported ill of the place, and in 1528 the last abbot, Thomas Pope, declared that it was "greatly in ruin." Probably, therefore, it was at no time a specially imposing structure.

The abbey was a possession of the Austin Friars, and grew out of a college of priests founded by Gytha, the Danish wife of the famous Earl Godwin, who is

one of the characters of Kingsley's *Hereward the Wake* and also of Lytton's *Harold*. According to tradition this lady built the first church at Stoke and dedicated it to St Nectan. Her motive for this step was a good one, since she believed that the saint had exerted his influence to preserve her husband from shipwreck during a storm, most likely off the coast of North Devon.

But there is another means of accounting for the dedication. St Nectan, it seems, came to reside at Hartland, and on a certain 17th of June a troop of ruffians chased him through the woods, and, having caught him, cut off his head at a place now called Newton. The saint took his head into his hands, carried it to St Nectan's Well, and having placed it on a stone, then, and only then, gave up the ghost. Long after, bloodstains remaining on the stone attested the truth of the miracle.

Rationalists hold that the legend is merely a picturesque version of the

removal of the church from Newton to Stoke, and they consider that it had been shifted once before—from Cheristow (*i.e.* Church Stow) to Newton. The local legends indicate a most unsettled state of affairs. At Harton the Devil interfered, and at Gurran's Down—the centre of the parish—the pixies. Every night, it is said, the little busybodies transferred the materials to Stoke.

The church has been termed the “Cathedral of North Devon,” and Hawker wrote a poem about it, of which we may quote the opening stanzas :—

“How wildly sweet by Hartland Tower
The thrilling voice of prayer ;
A seraph, from his cloudy bower,
Might lean to listen there.

“For time, and place, and storied days,
To that great fane have given
Hues that might win an angel's gaze,
'Mid scenery of heaven.”

Reference has been made to Pope's Chamber as the place in which the image of the Devil was housed, and which thus

became a "chamber of horrors," like that at Madame Tussaud's. At one time it seems to have merited this title in another and more painful sense, since the tale is that one of the canons of the abbey atoned for wrongdoing by shutting himself within its walls and refusing to see or converse with any of his kind. Day by day food and drink were placed for him at the bottom of the staircase, but he held no sort of communication with those who brought them.

Hawker, in his poem, speaks of the "Monk of Hartland Tower." This is a double error. The inmates of the abbey were not monks, and "Pope's Chamber" is situated not in the tower of the church, but over the north porch. The room seems to have been named after the last abbot, and no doubt that dignitary has been freely identified with the unknown penitent.

The shores of North Devon and Cornwall were formerly infested with smugglers. Of all that pestilent tribe, "Cruel Cop-

pinger" was *facile princeps*, and he resided at Hartland. In 1866 R. S. Hawker contributed a sensational account of this worthy to *All the Year Round*, from which I extract the following description of his advent and Sabine style of wooing:—

"His arrival was signalised by a hurricane. The shore and the heights above were dotted by watchers for wreck, those daring gleaners of the harvest of the sea.

"As the Western proverb says:—

" 'A savage sea and a shattering wind;
The cliffs before and the gale behind.'

"Suddenly like a phantom a strange vessel of foreign rig was seen struggling with the waves of Harty Race. She was deeply laden and water-logged, and rolled heavily, nearing the shore as she felt the tide. Gradually the pale faces of the crew became visible, and among them one of herculean build, who stood near the wheel with a speaking trumpet in his hand. The sails were blown to rags, and the rudder was apparently lashed for running

ashore. It was seen that the tall seaman, manifestly the skipper of the boat, had cast off his garments, and was prepared to battle with the surges. He plunged over the bulwarks and arose to sight, buffeting the seas. He made his way through the surf, and at last stood upright on the sand, a fine semblance of an old Viking of the northern seas. A crowd on horseback and on foot, women as well as men, had gathered, drawn by the tidings of a probable wreck. The dripping stranger rushed into their midst, snatched from a terrified dame her red Welsh cloak, cast it around him, and bounded suddenly upon the crupper of a young damsel, who had ridden down to see the sight. Grasping the bridle and shouting aloud in some foreign language, he urged on the doubly-laden animal, who naturally took his way home.

“Strange were the outcries that greeted the rider, Miss Dinah Hamlyn, when, thus escorted, she reached her father’s door in the actual embrace of a rough tall man,

who announced himself by a name never afterwards forgotten—Coppinger, a Dane. He arrayed himself without scruple in a Sunday suit of his host. The long-skirted coat of purple velveteen, with large buttons, became him well—so thought the lady of his sudden choice. He took his place at the family board and on the settle by the hearth as though he had been the most welcome guest. . . .

“The heart of the unsuspecting Dinah was won, and the marriage took place after a delay caused by the father’s illness and death.”

This delicious story is seemingly nothing more than a rather embellished folk-tale, though Coppinger undoubtedly married Ann (not Dinah) Hamlyn. Wrecked at Hartland in 1792, he was entertained at Golden Park, and wrote the following inscription on a window pane:—“D. H. Coppinger, shipwrecked December 23, 1792. Kindly received by Mr Wm. Arthur.”

His marriage took place about seven

months later, and is thus recorded in the parish register:—"Daniel Herbert Coppinger, of the King's Royal Navy, and Ann Hamlyn, mar^d by licence 3rd Aug."

The bride was the daughter of Mr Ackland Hamlyn of Galsham and Ann Velly, his wife, and, so far from being a young girl, had reached the staid age of forty-two. The subsequent proceedings of Master Coppinger are wrapped in obscurity, relieved only by the wild and almost impossible "yarns" of the ancient salts. It is known, however, that his wife succeeded to the Galsham property, and died at Barnstaple in 1833.

The neighbourhood of Hartland Quay is an ideal scene for an adventure like Coppinger's, since the rocks run far out to sea in dark, abrupt, needle-pointed masses, as at Lundy, which lonely isle bayoneted the *Vengeance* and H.M.S. *Montagu*, albeit it hangs like a "soft grey cloud." But enough for this time!



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